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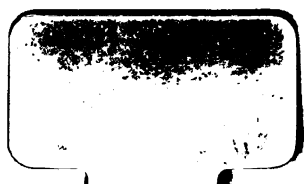
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01
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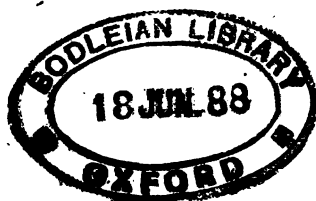
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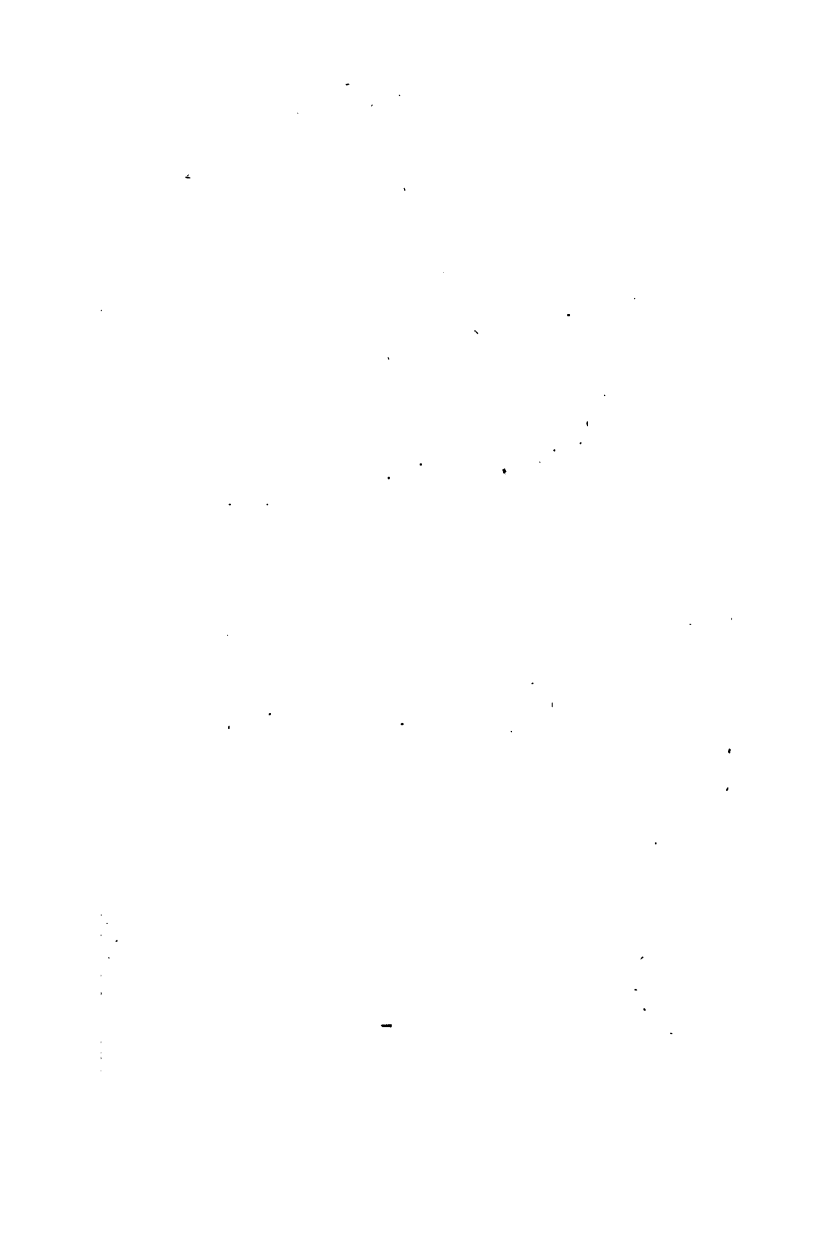
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2524. f. 25.



ERRATA.

- P. 28, line 10, a comma to be inserted after "Churches."
P. 38, line 10, *for* "some things, *read* "something."
P. 41, line 6, *for* "were," *read* "where."
P. 45, line 7, *for* "now," *read* "how."
P. 49, line 8 from the bottom, *read* "to which he had been directed one evening just."
P. 86, line 5, *for* "was he," *read* "he was."
P. 86, line 4 from bottom, *for* "wagons," *read* "waggon."
P. 87, line 10, *for* "wagons," *read* "waggon."
P. 96, line 7, comma to be put after "time," instead of after "happy."
P. 129, line 8, inverted commas after "Him."
P. 140, line 1, *for* "gatherd," *read* "gathered."
P. 167, at the beginning of line 10, *for* "will," *read* "Will."



BIBLE STORIES,

&c.

1.

THERE *was* a time, dear child, when there was no such thing as this pretty nice world which we admire ; no light, no sky, no grass or trees, no sweet flowers or singing birds, no bright sun, or peaceful moon, or little twinkling stars : all was dark, and without shape, and empty. But there was always a good and kind God, and amidst all this darkness His good Spirit moved upon the face of the waters. Then in His great mercy he said, “ Let there be light, and there was light ; ” and “ He called the light day, and the dark-

ness He called night:" and so He made both evening and morning, which were the first day. After this, out of His own goodness He made the blue sky, and the earth with trees, and fruits, and sweet-smelling flowers, and the cheerful sun to shine with its warm beams, and the quiet moon which throws its soft light when the little children are asleep, and the thousand pretty stars which we see at night. He made, too, all the fishes, and birds, and little creeping insects, and put them into the places that were fittest for them, and gave them all food to eat. All this was the work of the great and good God who takes care of every thing, and knows what is best for every thing, and loves every thing. But neither the earth, nor the little birds, nor the fishes, could love this

good God in return. No, they had not sense and reason to understand what a kind Father they had got. So, last of all, He made man, and gave him a heart to love Him, and sense to think of Him, and a mouth to praise Him; and in these powers of thinking and loving, He made him something like his Maker, and man was *then, very* good: nothing that was bad could come out of God's hands, and all these wonderful things God did in six days. This sweet story is written in the Bible, and there is a much longer account of all that He then did than I have time now to give you. When you are older and wiser you shall read it all yourself, but now you are too young; so we will pray to God to let us read it by and by together, in His own best book, and to give you a heart to understand and

love it when you are old enough to do so.—Let us now think a little about what we have been reading. Is there nothing besides what we read of here that is cold and dark, and gloomy and sad and empty, when God's good Spirit does not move upon it, and come into it, and that brings forth good things, things as sweet and pleasant as fruits and flowers, when our Heavenly Father shines there? Yes, dear child! God moves upon your heart to make it light, and soft, and gentle, and kind; there He will bring forth sweet tempers, and pure thoughts, and loving words, and kind actions, if you will attend to all that His good Spirit puts there; and these things will sound more sweetly to His praise than the songs of the little singing birds, who sing indeed and are happy, but do not know who

it is that has made them so. Happy little child! you can know and love and listen to this kind Father; happy little child! you can see, and thank Him for all the beauties of His hand; you can say with joyful lips, "All these wonders has He made, and He has given me a heart too which shall be His for ever."

2.

Now, when this great and good God had finished all His beautiful and glorious works in six days, he rested on the seventh, and blessed that day; that is, He made it a happier and a holier one than any other in the week, and set it apart for a day of rest, in which every body should have time to think of all the happiness which this kind Father *has* given them, and *will* still

give them if they seek it aright. The great and wise God, even at the time when all was so good and perfect, foresaw that cares and troubles would spring up in this world which He had made; and He therefore gave the kind command, that, on this happy day, all grief and toil should be laid aside, and that all His children should assemble together to thank the Lord for His goodness, and to ask Him for the blessings of which they stood in need. The poor tired animals that had worked hard all the week were to have their comfortable rest on this day; and the busy labourer, with his wife and dear little children, were to go hand in hand together to God's own house, to hear of all the wonders which He had done for them, to learn lessons of love, and peace, and kindness one towards

another, and of thankfulness to God. This sweet day *we* too will ever remember, and love, and receive with joy, for we are always to keep it holy: six days we will work hard and diligently at our daily tasks, never forgetting God at *any* time, but on the happy Sunday, the best of all days, we will try to think *only* of His goodness; we will love to hear of Him, to inquire after Him, to talk of Him, and above all to pray to Him; we will thank Him with all our hearts for giving us so great a blessing as one joyful Sabbath every week, when all cares, and labours, and sorrows may cease. Dear, dear child! as I write these words, a still sweeter season of holier rest comes into my mind, and oh! may this better rest be ours! When we have done fighting against sin, and when our

wicked passions are brought into peace; then there remaineth a sweet rest for the children of God. *This* life we will call our working day, when we must strive hard to conquer sin, and the world, and the devil. Jesus Christ will be our Leader and our Friend if we put ourselves under His care; and when we have overcome these enemies through Him, then He will take us to His own happy kingdom of pure peace and heavenly rest, which shall *never* end, where we shall grow better and better, and happier and happier for ever.

3.

BUT did not God say that man was *very* good when he was first created? How comes it then, that we feel so many naughty passions in our own hearts, and hear so much of sin in

those about us? Why are we not still as happy as when God made the first man Adam? Listen to me, dear child, and you shall know the sad, sad truth. When the great God had made Adam out of the dust of the ground, He wished him to be as happy as he was good; so He gave him a companion and friend called Eve, to be his wife: she was formed out of one of Adam's ribs whilst he was asleep; and it was intended that they should love each other very dearly, and God still better. When they were made, the Lord God put them into a sweet garden, called the Garden of Eden, or Paradise, full of the prettiest flowers, and shrubs, and trees, which they were to take care of and keep in order; and here they might have been always happy if they had never forgotten the

kind Father who placed them there, or disobeyed His word. But, alas! they became selfish, and listened to another voice instead of God's. One tree the Lord God forbade them to taste of; it was called the Tree of Knowledge, and they were told that if they ate of it, they should surely die. But the devil, in the form of a serpent, came to them, persuading them to believe him rather than God, and to disobey their Maker's commands. So they did both eat, Eve first; and afterwards she gave some of the fruit to her husband, to do the same. O wicked woman! not only to do wrong thyself, but to desire to lead thy companion also into sin. Soon, very soon, followed their punishment, for the voice of their Maker was heard "in the cool of the day" calling to Adam, and they

were both afraid, and tried to hide themselves. When any wicked passion has had its way, and in the cool stillness of quiet we can again listen to the voice of God speaking in our hearts, or by the lips of our kind friends, then we too feel afraid, and would gladly hide ourselves from His eye who made us. But who can be hid from God? He sees all things; he saw Adam and Eve in their hiding-place as he now sees *us* every moment; and though they wickedly tried to lay the blame upon each other, He knew that they were both guilty. So he turned Adam and Eve out of the happy garden in which they lived, and told them that their sin had brought sorrow, and sadness, and death into the world: for now the ground brought forth thorns and thistles; hard was their daily task,

kind and loving Father assured him, that his wicked enemy the devil, who had done *him* so much harm, should not have power to do him *more* hurt, nor to destroy all his dear children after him; God promised that He would Himself come down upon earth in the person of Jesus Christ to be the Saviour of all the world. He would not only be seen as a man to fight for them on earth, and lay down His life for His people, but He would, if they would receive His Spirit into their hearts, change those wicked hearts with which they should be born, into tender, and loving, and peaceful, and obedient ones. And if this promise comforted poor Adam in his banishment, shall it not be to us *indeed* great joy? For now, dear child, this loving Saviour *has* appeared on earth, and lived, and fought,

and conquered, and died for you, and for me, and for every human creature, so that all who truly come to Him shall be saved. And that they may be *able* to come to Him, He gives His Holy Spirit to those who ask it, to live in their hearts, and change them into such as are pure, and humble, and heavenly, like His own. O kind and merciful Saviour! let *us* now and always seek Thee; take us into Thy own keeping, for we cannot keep ourselves; never, never let us forget to praise Thee for this great mercy; never let us forget to pray that Thou wouldest thus live in our hearts, and change our selfish, angry natures into such as belong to the happy angels in Thine own heavenly kingdom.

5.

Now, though the blessed Saviour was not yet to be *seen* on earth, He was already working good for man, and it was very fit that the happy promise of His coming should always be remembered, and thought of, with thankfulness and joy; so, as He was to lay down His life for us, and present Himself a true and perfect man, as a sacrifice before God quite pure and spotless, to take away the sin of that nature which in every other man was become so very sinful, God commanded that a little patient lamb should from this time often be offered up to Him, and killed, to remind men of the holy Saviour Jesus Christ, who, with more patience and gentleness than any lamb, would shed His blood for them and

for us all. These offerings were called sacrifices. Soon after Adam and Eve had left Paradise, they had two sons, Cain and Abel. Cain worked in the fields and gardens, and Abel took care of the peaceful sheep, and their pretty little young ones. I dare say many sweet thoughts came into Abel's mind, as he looked at them, about that blessed Saviour who was to be "mild and gentle as a lamb," and that, whilst he watched them, he often prayed to the good God; for we read that he was very careful to offer up, as God commanded, the very best lambs of his flock; and the Lord loved him very much for his obedience. But Cain his brother did not make his offering as he ought to have done; he was selfish and envious, and angry that God loved his brother Abel who was good, better

than himself; and one day, in a fit of wicked passion, he struck this patient gentle brother, and killed him : and so Cain was a murderer.—Oh ! my dear dear child, what a shocking thing is passion ! passion too, indulged between dear brothers and sisters, who live in the same house, and pray together in the same room, and hear all together of the blessings that God promises to his affectionate, loving little children. Remember always that the good God placed so many dear brothers and sisters in one family, that they might all delight in helping, and pleasing, and being kind to each other ; and, oh ! remember that every time you feel a selfish temper, or a cross and angry passion, or speak unkindly and peevishly to any one, the devil, our wicked enemy, is tempting you as he did poor

Cain, and that if you indulge such feelings, you will be indeed like him ; for the Bible tells us, “ He that hateth his brother is a murderer.” Cain was very unhappy ever afterwards, for God was much displeased with him, and sent him away from his own home and country ; and in the misery of his wicked heart he said, “My punishment is greater than I can bear.” But Abel, happy Abel, was loved by God, and taken into heaven, and there we will hope to follow him, living in patience and mildness as he did, keeping our blessed Saviour always in our thoughts, praying to Him, and thinking of the sacrifice which He made for us. And let *us* too always make *our* sacrifices, that is, refuse to do every thing He dislikes, and offer up to His service every thing that He lends us, our health, our

youth, our time, our thoughts, and all that we love best in this world ; for all is His, and we must be ever ready to give it back to Him again.

6.

ADAM and Eve had several other children, who married, and had also families of their own ; so that there were in time a great many people in the world ; but (sad it is to think it !) these people at last forgot the great God, and became *very* wicked ; so much so, that the Lord determined to destroy them all except one good man named Noah, who with his wife and children was to be saved when all the rest of the world were drowned. Now Noah believed and obeyed every word that God spoke to him, and by His order he built an ark, which is a sort

of ship, and there he shut himself in with his wife and children, and some animals of every sort, with plenty of food for them all to eat whilst they were in it. When this was finished, God sent a heavy rain upon the earth, so heavy, that very soon nothing but water was to be seen all around ; no houses and trees, no pretty sheep and cows, no more men and women ; all were washed away in the flood : and this violent rain lasted forty days and forty nights. But in the midst of all this sad ruin, the little floating ship glided peacefully along upon the deep water, for God took care of it ; it could not but be safe in His keeping, and He remembered Noah and the people who were with him. So at the end of a hundred and fifty days, He sent a high wind to dry up the earth again ; and the

waters sunk lower and lower. Then Noah let a little dove fly out of the ark to see whether the water was yet gone down ; but the little dove found no safe resting-place for itself, and came back again to the quiet shelter of the ark. In seven days more, Noah again sent out this little winged messenger, and this time it brought an olive-leaf in its mouth, so Noah was sure that the trees had begun to appear : seven days afterwards its master again let it fly, and now it came back no more ; then Noah knew that the earth was quite dry, and he and his wife, and his three sons with their wives, came out of the ark. In all there were eight people saved. Now, what would they do, do you suppose, as soon as they again were on dry land ? They all knelt down, and with very

grateful hearts thanked the good God who had saved them. And the Lord was pleased with them for remembering Him in their happiness, and He gave them a promise that He would never drown the world any more: He gave them a sign too, to remember this promise by, in the beautiful rainbow which He showed them in the clouds; and whenever we see its lovely bright colours, we will think how safe we are under God's kind care, and will praise Him for all His goodness. Ah! we are at all times safe in *His* hands; troubles and sorrows are sometimes called waves in the Scripture; but when these are around us, we will run quickly to Him who is our Ark, for the Bible says, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run into it, and are safe."

7.

THE names of Noah's sons were Shem, Ham, and Japhet, and they had many children and grandchildren, so that there were again a great many people on the earth ; but, alas ! they, too, grew proud and wicked, and would not believe the kind promise of God to keep them in safety for the future, but chose to build themselves a high tower, thinking to get up to heaven by it, if there should be another flood. Silly, silly people ! and wicked as they were silly ! for what God promises He always performs, and if they had really believed in Him they would never have been afraid. So they set to work, determining to save themselves by their own hands ; but this it is quite impossible to do, and very soon they be-

gan to find it out. A strange alteration presently after took place in their manner of speaking, and they perceived that they had all forgot the words they were accustomed to say before, and that each spoke a different language, so that they could not now understand each other: this was "the Lord's doing," and it entirely prevented their finishing the Tower of Babel (as it was called), which they had so proudly and wickedly begun. They now, therefore, all separated, and went into different countries with their own families, by which means a great many parts of the world came to have people in them which had no inhabitants before.—My child! let *us* trust in the great God that made us, and *never* be afraid; let us believe with our whole hearts every word that He has spoken,

and never encourage the proud thought that we can do any thing without God's help. Look at the little new-born baby that stretches out its feeble hands, and has no power to supply one of its own wants: just so are we in God's sight; unless He was constantly supporting us, and giving us every needful thing, we should die in a moment, and after we were dead what would then become of us? There would be no life in our souls to make us happy, no hope of that better country called heaven, where we now trust, through His great goodness, to see, and live with Him for ever: but we may safely put all our affairs into His hands, for He has said these encouraging words, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

8.

You will be surprised at what I am now going to tell you, and very sorry too; for sad it is to think that any creatures who have reason, should forget to love and pray to the good God who made them; but, after a time, almost all the people who were scattered about, took strange fancies into their heads, and began to believe that there were many gods, instead of one, and some chose to pray to dead men and women, and some to worship the sun, and moon, and stars; others would kneel down to images made of wood and stone, and some to animals and creeping things; in short, it is impossible to tell you all the foolish thoughts that they encouraged, and how wicked they grew in consequence

of forgetting the one true God. These creatures that they now prayed to were called idols; and, alas! there are a great many people in the world, in countries far off, who still do the same. Poor, ignorant, unhappy beings! they have never been taught the truth. They have no Holy Bible to teach them about God; they have no churches or kind friends to talk to them about the great things which Jesus Christ has done for them. We will think of them with pity, and pray that the good God would forgive their ignorance, and put it into the hearts of those who live in happier countries, to send and teach them these glad tidings. And now, how happy I am to tell you, that many who love the great God very much themselves *are* doing so; they are gone to talk of

His goodness to those who never heard His name; they take with them the book that He has written, and teach the poor little heathen child to praise the Lord. We will pray for their success, and we will help them with our little offering of money as we are able. We will look too into our own hearts, and see whether there are any idols there. You will think it very strange that we, who know so well that there is only one good God, should ever think of trusting in any thing else, or that I should tell *you* to have no idols; but, my dear child, if there is any thing that you love better than God, *that* is your idol. Some silly children love dress, and play, and pleasure, more than God; and many, too many, love *themselves* much better; but we must remember to love God, the good

God, far above all. And as for ourselves, we must try always to be in the lowest place, loving our Heavenly Father the first and best; then turning our affections to every body around us; and, last of all, thinking of our own pleasure. God's good book has in it these sweet words, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

9.

BUT amidst all these wicked people who forgot their Maker, there was one good man who desired to do God's will, and loved to listen to God's voice and to obey it; and to save him from becoming wicked like the rest (for there is always danger in listening to bad companions), the Lord commanded him to leave his own country, and take a journey to a land which He

would show him. Abraham (for this was the good man's name) never once stopped to consider whether he should or should not do as God commanded him; he made no objections to part with every thing and every body at his own home that he loved and liked, but set out directly quite cheerfully with God, feeling entirely certain that what God ordered must be best.—Now, my little child, are we always, like faithful Abraham, ready to give up our own will and our own pleasure to obey those whom the good God has set over us, without ever murmuring, or questioning why such and such commands are given us? Are we, too, going on our journey with this good God for our guide, never losing sight of Him for a moment, but moving patiently forward to the better home

that He has provided for us, rejoicing by the way, and thinking of the great happiness that we shall find at the end of our road? For, my dear child, we *are* all upon a journey at this very moment. God is leading us by the hand, though we do not see Him, day by day, towards our happy home in heaven; and if we do not turn aside from Him, and choose to go other ways than the one He would guide us in, we shall all, by His help, one day arrive safely in His own happy land. So we will pray to be like good Abraham; not having our hearts fixed on this spot of earth, and wishing to take up our rest here, but travelling on joyfully to a better home, with our great God for our leader.—Abraham took with him his wife Sarah, and his nephew Lot; but when they had been

some time together, their servants began to quarrel, so they then determined to part. Abraham was older than Lot, and richer, and had more power; and how do you think he used these gifts? Not in ordering and commanding, and taking the best of every thing for himself: no; he kindly gave Lot the choice, and bade him take which part of the country he liked most to settle in, and Lot fixed in a town called Sodom, whilst Abraham lived in the land of Canaan.—Wise Abraham! thus to give up when thou hadst the power of choosing! Happy too, as well as wise, to yield to one weaker and younger than thyself! Such tempers as thine are dear to God; they are those of which our Saviour Jesus Christ, when He was on earth,

said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

10.

God had promised Abraham, that he should some time have a son, and that out of his family there should come a people amongst whom there should always be some who would faithfully serve their Maker, and not worship idols, like the other wicked nations. He promised too, that a very great blessing should be in this family, and this very great blessing was nothing less than that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was by and by to be born amongst them. You may think how happy all these kind promises made Abraham. Well; year after year went by, and yet he had no child. Abraham began to grow very

old, and to long very much for the son that God had said He would give him ; but he still never doubted, that at the right time he should have what he wished for. He trusted in God so entirely, that he *never* felt afraid. When our wishes are denied for a time, let us pray to wait contentedly, and believe firmly, like pious Abraham. At last a little boy was born, whom they called Ishmael. Now Abraham felt sure that this was the son from whom God's people were to come; but the Lord very soon told him that this was not so, and that he should have another child, who was to be the child of promise. Again Abraham waited patiently as before ; and by and by, when he and Sarah were both very old indeed, another dear little boy was born, who was

called Isaac. It is impossible to say how joyful they were at his birth, or how much they loved him. Ishmael grew up a very rude boy, and behaved ill to little Isaac and his mother, for Ishmael was not Sarah's son. In those days people were allowed to have more wives than one, and this little boy's mother was called Hagar. When there were quarrels in the house, Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael to live from home, giving her food to carry with her for the journey; but as they travelled along through the wilderness, which is a dismal place without houses, and where no fruits grow, the bottle of water which she held in her hand was spilt on the ground, and the young child very nearly fainted for thirst. Then poor Hagar's distress was great, for she thought her

dear child would die: but, though she could not see one friend to help her, there *was* a *very* powerful Friend close by her side at that very instant. It was God himself, who is always near us in our trouble, and He spoke to her and comforted her, saying, "Fear not." Then He told her, that He would take care of the boy and provide for him, and immediately he gave her a whole well of water instead of the little she had lost; and her son grew up to be a strong and powerful man.

What shall we learn from this story? What lesson do you think poor Ishmael learnt when he was thirsty and fainting in the wilderness? Ah! he would look back upon the happiness of his father's house, and think with sorrow of his past beha-

viour to his little brother, which had brought upon him this distress. "Were I now with him," he would say, "I would never laugh at him, or tease him more." We will do the same. When we are in sorrow, it shall bring our past faults to our minds; we will mourn over them, and repent. *Hagar*, too, shall teach us some things: we will remember the words that God spoke to her in her distress. If we are passing through a dismal part of our journey, if we are sad, or sick, or tempted to sin, we will remember that we have, like her, a Saviour and a sure Friend by our side; we will say to ourselves God's own words, "Fear not," and be comforted.

11.

POOR Lot made a sadly mistaken choice when he fixed upon the town of Sodom to live in after he parted from Abraham, for the people of that place were very wicked, "and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." Lot, however, continued to love God; but it must have made him very unhappy to see nothing but wickedness in those about him. Ah, my dear child! when we are eager to choose for ourselves, we little know what we are doing. Very apt we are indeed to choose amiss. Often the very thing we wish for, would prove our ruin if it were granted. Kindly, very kindly, it is many times denied us, that we may not hurt ourselves, whilst at some others we are permitted to have

our desire, that we may learn to see our own folly, and grow humble, and contented for the future with all that God provides. A long time the Lord spared the wicked people, to see whether they would repent; but, alas! they would not turn from their evil ways, and at last he determined to destroy them. The good God would not, however, destroy Lot, who loved Him, with the rest, so He sent two of His beautiful bright angels to tell him of his danger, and to desire that he would quit the city directly, with all his family. Lot repeated what he had heard, to "his sons-in-law, who married his daughters;" but they would not believe his words, nor would they be persuaded to leave the wicked place which they so dearly loved. The next morning, the angels again

assured Lot that there was no longer any time to be lost; and now he was prevailed upon to take his wife and his two daughters, and to endeavour to find shelter in a little peaceful place called Zoar, where they would be safe under God's care. But the angels charged them, on no account to look behind them, or loiter by the way. No sooner had Lot and his family left the city than there fell showers of fire and brimstone from heaven, and burnt down the whole town of Sodom, and that of Gomorrah, which was near it, where the people were equally wicked, so that every one of the inhabitants was destroyed. But did all those escape who set out with Lot upon his journey? Alas! no; one poor sufferer was lost by her own foolish disobedience. Though

Lot's wife was persuaded to leave Sodom, she did not do it *cheerfully*; her thoughts and wishes were still upon that wicked spot; she looked behind her at it, and lingered on the road, contrary to the angels' command; and, to the great distress and terror of her companions, was immediately turned into a pillar of salt.—O let *us* never loiter in our duties, but let our obedience, unlike hers, be cheerful, prompt, and active. If the task be painful, every instant that we hesitate does but increase our difficulty in performing it. When we delay the work, it is plain that our *hearts* are not in it; and God, my child, requires that our hearts as well as our actions should be His. Lot's wife then shall be often in our minds; we will learn wisdom from her sad story. It tells us that we

must not only *do* what God commands, but *love* to do it. When our kind Father forbids us any thing, we must not even dare to *wish* for it, for the thoughts within us must be obedient to His will; we must hate every thing that is displeasing to Him, and never venture to think or love any thing in our secret hearts that He tells us to avoid. Yet let us not trust to ourselves, for our best resolves are very deceitful; let us pray to our good God every day and every hour to watch for us, to "look well if there be any way of wickedness in us, and lead us in the way everlasting."

12.

WE have seen how happy Abraham was with the dear child that God had given him; and this dear child was every day growing up more and more

in the fear of God, and in the love of his parents, so that they looked at him with delight, and grew every hour more fond of their long-expected boy. But Abraham, much as he loved and obeyed his Maker, could not expect to meet with no afflictions. No, my child; the wise and great God, who always does what is best for us, often sends very heavy sorrows to those who are most dear to Him, to try their hearts, whether they will indeed be His both in trouble and in joy: and because He knows too, that in sorrow, patience and gentleness, and a great many other sweet tempers are gained, all tempers such as the happy angels possess in heaven; so now Abraham, who had learnt to love and obey God in his happiness, is to learn to love and obey him too when afflictions

come; and for this purpose his heavenly Father one day called to him, and told him to take his darling child and offer him up to God for a burnt offering. We may think how sad his poor heart would feel at receiving such a command, and now the tears would come into his eyes whenever he looked at his dear Isaac whom he loved so fondly; but he never once murmured, or begged that God would not give him so hard a trial; he never asked *why* he was to perform the duty imposed, or thought of questioning the *wisdom* or the *mercy* of the order which he had received; God had given the command plainly, and *therefore* it was right in his eyes; he knew that the son whom he loved belonged to God, and that He had a right to take him back again in any way he thought best;

besides, though he loved Isaac dearly, he loved God still more. So the next morning he got up very early, and saddled the ass, and cut the wood which was to burn on the altar where he was to kill his son ; then he took his dear child with him, who cheerfully carried the wood, and they set out both together for the place of which God had told him. As they were going along, Isaac said, " My father, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering ? " Then Abraham answered, " My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering ; " and they continued to travel on together. When they were at their journey's end, Abraham took his dear child, and bound him, and laid him on the altar upon the wood ; but we do not read that Isaac once

struggled, or distressed his poor father with his cries, or even begged to be released. No; he was calm and patient, picturing to us that still more mild and patient Saviour who came after him, and who willingly laid down *His* life for his most cruel enemies. Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slay his son; but no sooner had he done so, than he heard a voice calling to him out of heaven, and desiring him to release his dear child, for that God only intended to try whether he was ready to part with what he loved best in this world, to obey his Maker, and that He was quite satisfied with his obedience. Then Abraham, in the fulness of his very thankful heart, looked round for something that he might offer up to God, to show his gratitude for this great mercy, and

he saw a ram caught by his horns in the bushes just by him, and he took the ram, and offered it up instead of his son.—Ah, my child! what a lesson for us all is written here! and what serious questions it tells us every one to ask ourselves! What do *I* love best in the world? Is it myself or my friends, my health or my comfort? Whatever it be, however dear, however *necessary* it may seem, I *must* be ready cheerfully to part with it at God's command; it *is* His. Nothing can be called my own; I must never, therefore, even *wish* to keep any thing away from God, which He desires me to return to Him. I do every night and morning say these words, "Thy will be done." O good God! let me every moment think them, and feel them, and do them, that I may be ready at all times

to say with a cheerful heart, and with a *very* true wish to give up my own will upon all occasions, "Behold, Lord, all that I have is thine."

13.

WHEN Abraham was grown very old indeed, and thought he had but a short time to live, he began to wish very much to see his dear son Isaac happily married before he died; and as he could not find amongst the women of that country, a wife for his son, who would fear and love the good God, he sent a very faithful servant of his to a place a great way off, to look for one amongst some of his own relations. The good old man arrived at the city of Nahor, to which he one evening had been directed, just about the time that the women of the place used to go to the

well to draw water; and as he was afraid of making a bad choice if he trusted to himself, he knelt down by the side of the well, and prayed that whoever the Lord would fix upon for Isaac's wife, might come down there and offer him some water for his camels to drink. In those countries people had camels instead of horses for their journeys. He had scarcely done praying, before a very sweet-looking young woman came down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and as soon as she saw the servant standing there, and the poor camels looking sadly tired after their long journey, she first gave the man water to drink out of her pitcher, and then said she would draw again for his camels till they had quenched their thirst. Now camels drink but seldom, but when they are

thirsty they take a large quantity at a time, so that she had a very great deal of trouble in drawing all this water ; therefore the servant saw by this little action that she was not idle, but kind and good-natured and pitiful, and he felt sure that this was the person whom the Lord intended for Isaac's wife. Then he said to her, " Whose daughter art thou ? " and she told him her name was Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, by which he found out she was Abraham's niece ; and she invited him and his camels to come with her to her father's house. But he did not forget, before he left the well, to kneel down and thank the good God who had so provided every thing for his advantage. When they reached Rebekah's home, he was very kindly received by her father and mother, and he told them

who he was, and why he was come, and how he had begged the Lord to show him a wife for Isaac: then her parents gladly consented that she should go back with him and be married to so good a man; and they set out together for the land of Canaan. Abraham and Isaac were quite pleased at the success of this journey, and Isaac married Rebekah, and loved her very dearly. Yes, my dear child, kindness and sweet temper are better gifts than beauty, for these are loved by God; and it is the foolish and the vain who think of outward appearance. A wicked proud heart may be hid under a fair skin and bright colour; but the tender, and the loving, and the humble child is God's delight. Rebekah sought for opportunities of showing that she was God's child by being kind to her fellow-

creatures, and even to the poor dumb animals that could not ask for themselves. Will my dear child pray to do the same? Will she remember, that little, and weak, and helpless as she is, she may still show her wish to imitate her blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, who "went about doing good;" and will she often think of some very comforting words which that gracious Saviour has said to those who can do but *very* little, that even a cup of cold water given to a little helpless child, out of love to Him, shall never lose its reward?

14.

ISAAC and Rebekah were married a great many years before they had any child; and as they wished for one very much, that the promised Saviour might be born in their family, they asked this

favour from the good God, who soon after sent them two little boys, the eldest of whom they called Esau, and the youngest Jacob. Esau was very fond of hunting, but Jacob used to stay at home and lead a quiet life: when I read this story, it always seems to me that the one loved pleasure and amusement, and the other delighted in God. As Esau was the elder, it was supposed that, by right of birth, the great nation, which God had promised to bless so particularly, would be born from him, and his father was therefore to give him a better blessing than Jacob; but Esau seems to have thought very little about the great happiness of having such a Saviour come into the world, and spring from his family; for one day, when he came in, very tired, from hunting, and saw his brother

eating some broth, or pottage as the Bible calls it, he promised to exchange this great blessing of his birthright for the poor provision of food that Jacob was then eating. So the exchange was made, and a sad exchange indeed it was: thus it always is, when things of earth are loved better than things of heaven.—Dear little child! though your fond mother calls you hers, and loves you so tenderly; though she lives with you constantly, and prays for you hourly; you *really* belong to One, who loves you ten thousand times better, who tends you more carefully, who watches you more incessantly, whose every thought towards you is love. The great and good God Himself condescends to acknowledge you for His *own*, and to call Himself your loving and tender Father; as His dear child

He gives *you* a birthright, and a glorious promise if you will not despise it. By this birthright you may belong to Him always, and receive from Him all that can make your soul live for ever : this glorious promise is a home in heaven. *You* may part with these high hopes if you desire it, like foolish Esau ; you may sell them for something as little lasting as his mess of pottage. Poor fellow ! when it was eaten he would soon be hungry again ; and when any careless children exchange their thoughts and hopes of God and heaven for any wicked inclinations and pleasures which belong only to themselves and this world, their joys quickly pass away, then they begin to be in want, and to sigh after the pleasures of their father's house. Be not, my child ! like them, but ponder in your little heart

what your lips each night and morning utter; and when with your feeble voice you exclaim, "Our Father which art in heaven," remember that you are indeed called to be His own, and as such, to love and value above all things, the portion which He is desirous to give you.

15.

Now we come to a sad history! and my little child will be pained to see distress brought upon poor old Isaac in his latter years, and Rebekah and Jacob, who till now have appeared so good, falling into a very great sin. We must, however, hear the whole truth, and perhaps it may teach us some useful lesson which we will try to remember as long as we live. I told you, that because Esau was the elder son, he was to have a better blessing from his

father than Jacob; now, Jacob was his mother's favourite, and she wished him very much to get the blessing from Esau, as he had before done, the birthright; so she took a sad deceitful way of bringing about what she wished for her darling; but it did not in the end make her happy. Good Isaac was not only old, but quite blind before he died; and one day, when he was thinking that he might very likely soon go out of this world, he told Esau that he would give him the blessing he had promised him as soon as he came in from hunting, and had brought him some venison to eat. When Rebekah heard this, she went to her dear Jacob, and desired him to pass himself off for Esau, and to take some meat in his hand, which she would give him, and to get the blessing from his father,

saying, "I am Esau thy first-born." Ah, Rebekah! was *that real love* for thy child which bade thee persuade him to do a wicked action? And thou, poor Jacob! hast thou forgotten, that though thy earthly father could not see thee, thy heavenly Father's eyes were upon thee, and that "lying lips are hateful to the Lord?" Jacob did indeed forget to think of God at this sad moment; and though Isaac said, "The voice is Jacob's voice," still he believed Jacob's assurance that it was Esau himself who was before him, and he gave him the blessing which he asked for. Did he give him happiness too, with it? Ah no! Jacob's own heart told him he had done wrong; and Esau, when he came in from hunting, was very angry, and threatened to kill him; so that Rebekah was obliged to

send her dear Jacob away from his father's house to her own brother Laban, who lived a great way off, for fear that Esau should really hurt his brother: this made her very unhappy, and now, I dare say, she bitterly repented of the great fault she had committed. We wonder that she should have been guilty of it; we sigh to see that Jacob, whom we had used to think so good, should have been led into so great a sin; but, my little child! though we must be very sorry for the faults of others, we must not be *surprised* at them; "there is none really good but One, that is, God;" we have every one of us an evil nature within us, which often leads us into sin: this must make us very pitying and forgiving to every body who is so unhappy as to do wrong; it must teach us to think very humbly

of ourselves, knowing that "without God's grace we can do nothing," and remind us to watch very closely all that passes within our own hearts, and to say *very* earnestly to the good God this most needful prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

16.

WE must now see how poor Jacob fared, when, through his own bad behaviour, he was obliged to leave his father's house, and go into a far distant country: sadly enough he journeyed along, no doubt; and when he rested the first night, he had nothing but the cold ground for his bed, and a stone for his pillow; but the good God can give comfort every where; He can change the dreariest spot into a place of happiness; and though our hearts

may be heavy when we lie down to sleep at night, He often makes us wake with peace and joy in the morning. So now He did to the poor wanderer in his distress; by which we may be quite sure that He saw how very truly Jacob had repented of his past fault, and grieved for what he had done. For what sweet sight, do you think, was given to Jacob whilst his outward eyes were fast closed in sleep? Such a sight as you and I, my child, have never yet beheld, nor even can fancy in all its brightness. "He dreamed, and saw a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven, and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending upon it." And (best of all!) the Lord Himself stood above it, and He said sweet words of comfort to Jacob, and promised that He would be

with him wheresoever he went, and bring him in safety again to his own country. In His mercy, the great God promised too, that the blessed Saviour should be born in his family, as He had before said both to Abraham and Isaac. Oh! how joyfully did Jacob awake from this sweet and heavenly dream, a dream of truth sent by his merciful Father to comfort him in his great sorrow: then, with a grateful heart, he rose from his hard but happy pillow, and he promised faithfully that he would always take the Lord for his God. And the Lord afterwards changed his name from Jacob to Israel. Jacob was at first kindly received by his uncle Laban, and he married his two daughters, Leah and Rachel, and the good God gave a blessing to all that he did, so that he grew rich, and succeeded in

all he undertook ; but after some time, Laban began not to look so kindly upon Jacob as he had done before, and the Lord then told him to take his wives, and children, and all that he had, and return again to his own country. When he was on the road to his own home, his sin against Esau rose sadly to his remembrance, and he sent to beg his brother's forgiveness before his return ; but the servant came back to him, and told him that Esau was coming to meet him with a very large number of people, and Jacob felt afraid. Then he prayed very earnestly to the good God to save him, and began his prayer *quite* humbly, as we should always do when we speak to such an almighty and glorious Lord ; for he said, " O God of my father Abram, and God of my father Isaac, I

am not worthy of the least of all the mercies which thou hast showed unto thy servant." And O! how lovingly did the mighty God listen to, and grant poor Jacob's prayer: He so softened Esau's once angry temper, with His own spirit of love and gentleness, that, instead of saying one unkind word to Jacob, who very meekly humbled himself before him, he ran to meet him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him, and they both wept. Blessed, blessed sight! for these were tears of sorrow for past faults, and of love, and forgiveness, and joy, once more to meet again as dear friends and long-lost brothers. Yes, my loved child, heaven and earth rejoice when the angry temper is subdued, and peace returns between those who were born to love each other. If a brother or a sister

offend, let not an angry sound be raised ; “ a soft answer turneth away wrath ; ” and if pride, or peevishness, or self-love have disturbed one little heart within the home where all was harmony and peace, O think upon the kiss of kind forgiveness Esau gave his brother, think of the humble pardon asked by sorrowing Jacob, think of the holy angels who “ rejoice in heaven over one sinner that repenteth ; ” above all, think of the blessed Virgin’s Son, “ that sweet and lovely child ! ”

His soul was gentle as a lamb ;
And as his stature grew,
He grew in favour both with man,
And God His Father too.

Now, Lord of all, He reigns above,
And from His heavenly throne
He sees what children dwell in love,
And marks them for His own.

17.

I BELIEVE I told you that Jacob (or Israel as he is often called) had two wives, Leah and Rachel; he had also twelve sons; the two best of these were Joseph and Benjamin; they were the children of his wife Rachel, who was *very* very dear to him; and this dear wife was taken to heaven, just after Benjamin was born. Joseph was his darling above *all* the others, and indeed we cannot wonder at it, for we shall soon see how he served God and was loved by Him, and what a kind and gentle creature he was. His father had given him a coat of many colours as a proof of his love; but, alas! the affection that Jacob showed him raised some very wicked passions in the breasts of his older brothers, and “they hated

him, and could not speak peaceably unto him." Now the good God was in those days often pleased to make known His will to His people in dreams, very different from the common dreams we have now, which it would be both foolish and wrong to be guided by, because we have now God's own word written down to be our rule and direction. These extraordinary dreams, which God's people then received, were often sent to them with advice and comfort; and Joseph had two messages sent from God in this manner, by which he was taught that he should some time be greater than his brethren, and have power over them; and as he foolishly told them these dreams, they hated him still more than they had done before. So, one day, when his father had sent him upon a kind errand

to them, as they were feeding their flocks, they determined to kill him, and put his body into a pit, and say that some savage animal had devoured him. But one of these brothers, named Reuben, had more pity than the rest, and he said, "Let us not kill him;" so he persuaded them to put him alive into the pit, which was very deep, but had no water in it; and he intended, when his brothers were gone away at night, to come again to the place, and take him safely home to his father. But as they were sitting down to eat their dinner, (strange, that they *could* eat whilst they had left their poor brother in so much misery!) some merchants came by, who were travelling into a far country, and, thinking now to get safely rid of Joseph, without the great sin of leaving him there

to die, they sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver, and the Ishmaelites carried Joseph into Egypt. Reuben was not by, when all this happened, and when he came again to the pit and found no one in it, he was very sorry indeed. But what was to be said to poor old Jacob when the others should go back at night, and no Joseph be with them? My dear child, I hardly can bear to tell you of so much wickedness, but it *must* be told: these cruel brothers did not spare their good old father, or pity his sorrows, nor did they fear to tell a lie before the great God, who knew all that had passed, any more than they *had* feared to hate and ill-use poor Joseph; so they dipped the coat which his father had given him, into some blood, and carried it home with them, making Jacob believe that

his darling son had been devoured by a wild beast: and this fond father wept, and could not be comforted. But *we* will be comforted, dear child; for a happy end shall come at last to all his troubles. One little moment longer we must bear to think of the cruel sons of Jacob, that we may learn to hate the *faults* which they were guilty of, though we will not hate, but only pity those unhappy people who commit such sins. Take care of jealousy; that is, pray to God to give you a heart that shall delight to see the goodness, and to hear the praises of other people. O! be glad when others are glad, for it is a sweet joy to "rejoice with those who do rejoice;" and if a brother or a sister have gained a smile of approbation, or a look of love, or a word of praise from the dear parents and friends

whom you most wish to please ; nay, even should you at the same time be little noticed, or, it may be, in disgrace for some fault which well deserves reproof, feel even at that moment, that you can still take pleasure in their joy, for so should " little children love one another." It was jealousy first, that led Joseph's unkind brothers to use him ill ; and it was pride, which did not like the thoughts of his being set over them, that at last determined them to get rid of him entirely. Pride and jealousy are two great faults in the sight of God ; may they never be suffered to live and grow in your infant bosom ; they begin with very little beginnings, with feelings, and thoughts, and wishes ; but they grow stronger and stronger, if they are not early taken away by God's gracious Spirit, till they end, as

we have just seen, in cruelty, and hatred, and hardness of heart; in evil deeds as well as evil purposes.

18.

Now let us inquire what became of Joseph after he had been sold to the Ishmaelites, and been carried by them into the far distant country of Egypt; let us see whether his unkind brothers have indeed had power to hurt him, and whether his God has quite forsaken him. As soon as he arrived at his journey's end, he was again sold as a servant to a rich man called Potiphar, and here he was very happy; for in this humble condition he behaved so well, that his master loved him, and trusted him with every thing that he had; and God's blessing so rested upon him, that every thing went well which he under-

took. But, as I told you before, those who love and serve God will be permitted to have sorrow and trials sometimes, to make them love Him still better, and trust Him still more; and so it was with Joseph now; for Potiphar's wife was a very wicked woman, and tried to prevail upon Joseph to be wicked too, to disobey God, and to behave ill to his master; and when he would not listen to her persuasions, she made up a very wicked story which she told to her husband: this made him think that Joseph had behaved ill, and his master was very much displeased, and put him in prison. And now, my child, how do you suppose he felt there? very sad and sorrowful, very angry with his master, and very fearful that his God had forgotten him in his distress? No, not one feeling of

this sort came near him; the God whom he served so faithfully, Himself was his comforter. Joseph would not sin against God, to gain the favour of his mistress; and now we read that "the Lord was with Joseph" in the prison; and when the Lord draws near to us, He always brings with Him content, and peace, and joy. Even the keeper of the prison learned to love Joseph; and though he was shut up, he was still able to be of some use to others, for he took care of the rest of the prisoners, and comforted them, and did them good. Now Joseph had received from God the power of understanding dreams; and not long after this, Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, had two extraordinary ones, sent him by the Lord, which nobody could explain to him; so, having heard of Joseph, he sent for him out

of prison, and was told by him that these dreams were meant to let him know that for seven years there would be a great deal more corn in the country than there had ever been before, and that when these seven years were ended, there would be such a scarcity, or famine, as it is called, all over the earth, that there would be no bread at all to eat. All this happened exactly as Joseph had said, and the king rewarded him with all sorts of presents, and made him governor over all the land of Egypt. So now, Joseph was a very great and rich man, and God gave him both the will and the power to be very useful indeed; for, whilst the corn was so plentiful, he ordered barns to be built, and laid up in them very large provisions; therefore, when the seven years of scarcity came, there was

still plenty of bread in Egypt, and people came there from all the countries round to buy corn, when they were ready to perish. Happy Joseph! thus to be blessed of God, and raised up by Him to be a helper to others in their distress. Happy Joseph! thus to have been saved in the hour of temptation, and by God's grace enabled to refuse to act wickedly. Happy Joseph! even shut up within thy prison walls, for God was with thee in the prison. We will pray that our lot may be like thine, that thy God may be our God, ever near to strengthen and comfort us, whether we be tempted, or ill treated, or sad, or forsaken; "if God be for us, who can be against us?" Joseph's brothers thought to do him harm, but the great God, whom he served, turned all their anger to his good; well then

may we say, as the Scriptures teach us to do, "happy are the people that are in such a case; yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God."

19.

I wish you were old enough to read the Holy Bible yourself, dear child, for I sadly spoil the sweet story of Joseph by telling it you in any words but God's own words; and I must leave out some things in it which make it too long for me to tell, and which perhaps you might not now understand. We left poor old Jacob and his sons in the land of Canaan, whilst we followed Joseph to his prison, and to the king's palace. Now, by and by the scarcity of corn was very great in Canaan; and when Jacob heard that there was plenty in the land of Egypt, he desired his

sons to go down there, and try to buy food for themselves and him; but he would not part with his little Benjamin, for he was now the only child he had left of his dear wife Rachel, and he was afraid that mischief would happen to him. As soon as Jacob's sons came into Egypt, they were brought before Joseph, for he was governor over all the land, and it was he who sold the corn. He was so changed that they did not recollect him, but he remembered *them* directly, though he did not at first make himself known to them. And when they bowed down before him, he asked them a great many questions, and then desired them to return home again, and to bring their youngest brother with them. But he did not send them back again unkindly, as he might have done, and refuse to

grant them the corn they asked for; no, he gave it them "without money and without price;" for, when they opened their sacks, they found them not only full of corn, but the money that they had paid for it was put back again there safely. At first poor old Jacob refused to let his darling Benjamin go back with his brothers, as Joseph had desired; for he thought of the dear child that he had lost, and feared to lose Benjamin also; but when all the corn was done, and they were afraid to ask for more without him, he consented to part with him, though very sorrowfully, and sent him away with the rest. Has Joseph forgotten his dear old father all this time? Is his heart grown proud, and hard, and selfish, now that he is great and powerful? and, caring only for himself, has

he ceased to love his little *Benjamin* also? O no; his first words when they returned were; "Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake; is he yet alive?" And, immediately after, when he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, he said; "Is this your younger brother of whom ye spake to me?" and he said, "God be gracious unto thee, my son!" Then his full heart could no longer bear its warm feelings of love and joy, and "he entered into his chamber, and wept there." Kindly did he entertain all his brethren, and talked with them (though they knew him not) of the dear father whom they had left behind; and when they repeated to Joseph how poor old Jacob had mourned at parting with Benjamin, saying, "If any mischief befall him, ye

shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave," Joseph could not refrain himself, but wept aloud, and said unto his brethren, "I am Joseph;" and again he asked, "Doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence." O poor unhappy sons of Jacob! now indeed are you humbled before your brother; now indeed may all your sins rise to your remembrance with shame and sorrow; for this Joseph, whom you have so ill treated, is become your comforter, your preserver, your support. Does he reproach his brothers for their cruel treatment? Listen to his own mild words: "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt; now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither, for

God did send me before you to preserve life: so now it was not you that sent me hither, but God." Ah, my child! *I* have read of a *greater* than Joseph, and whilst I tell this story my heart *will* turn to think of Him and to praise Him. Yes; *this* Joseph, so tender and forgiving, is intended to remind us of one, who, like him, was sold for thirty pieces of silver, to His most cruel enemies; "who was taken to prison and to death," though He had done no wickedness, and who, in His bitterest sufferings, prayed for His murderers, and even died for their very sakes. Like Joseph too, He was raised from a prison to a throne, a throne in heaven; for He of whom I speak is "King of kings, and Lord of lords;" He is *your* Saviour, and mine, my child, even the Lord Jesus Christ,

who now feeds *us* with bread, bread more to be desired than Joseph's, for ours is "the bread of life," which we ask for day by day, that our drooping *souls* may live forever. Shall not we then love this story of Joseph still better than before, since it reminds us of this loving Saviour, and all that He has done for us? Shall we not treasure it in our hearts, and pray that we may, like Him, be patient and forgiving, mild and gentle? Shall we not remember His own sweet words, "Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you?"

20.

I HAVE not yet quite made an end of the story of Joseph, my dear child; I have yet one little word more to say

to you about his tender love to his once cruel brothers, and his dutiful remembrance of his dear old father Israel. As soon as he had comforted his sorrowing brethren, and assured them of his full forgiveness, he said unto them, "Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down to me, tarry not, lest thou and thy household and all that thou hast come to poverty." He did not forget, you see, *who* it was that had done these great things for him; he did not think highly of *his own* cleverness, and boast of having raised *himself* by wisdom and goodness to the high place he held; nor did he give the praise to *any man*; for neither did he say, *The king* hath made me lord over Egypt. No, no; he well knew

who it was that had directed the king's heart to send for him. He well knew who it was that had made him able to explain the king's dream when he *was* sent for; he knew, and was he glad to acknowledge, that it was the great and good God, who had led him by the hand ever since the hour he was born. Then "he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck; moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them, and after that his brethren talked with him." Soon, they set out upon their journey to tell this good news to their poor father; and Pharaoh the king, who loved Joseph, kindly told them to take wagons, in order to bring back the old man, and their own wives and children and all that they had, and promised that they should all be taken

care of in *his* country, and treated kindly. But how did Jacob receive the unexpected news? It is said in the Bible, when "they told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over the land of Egypt, Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph which he had said unto them; and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob revived, and Israel said, It is enough, Joseph my son is yet alive, I will go and see him before I die." So he set out directly; and when he was at a little distance, his dear and dutiful Joseph went to meet him, and "fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art

yet alive." Ah, dear child! this was indeed a happy meeting, and happily did they all continue to live together for many many years. Jacob was happy in seeing his dear son once more, and happier still in finding him blessed by the good God, and growing every day in wisdom and goodness. And was not Joseph happy too, do you think, in being permitted to take care of that dear father in his old age who had watched over him so fondly when he was a little helpless baby, and had always loved him, and had taught him early to know and serve his God? Yes, he was indeed happy, and he has left us an example here too, which we will never forget. Have we dear parents who love us tenderly, and lead us early to a heavenly Father that can bless us more? Does a fond mother's eye shed

tears for us when we are in sin and sorrow, and does a dear father's smile rejoice with us and gladden our bounding hearts when all is peace and love within our happy dwelling? O let us be their comfort and their hope from our earliest to our latest years; let us give them our infant love, our youthful gratitude, the support of our manly strength if they require it; let us never grieve them by our faults, or forget to follow their good advice and sweet example. God's own book contains these never-to-be-forgotten words; "My son, keep thy father's commandments, and forsake not the law of thy mother."

21.

AFTER the death of good old Israel, Joseph and his brothers continued to live happily all together in Egypt, lov-

ing each other as they had done before, and every thing going well with them; they were blessed by God, who called them his own people; they were in favour with Pharaoh, who treated them kindly; and their families grew large and powerful: these families were now called Israelites, as being the children of Jacob, or Israel. But this happiness did not last long. By and by Joseph died, and soon after him the good king Pharaoh died also: then another Pharaoh, who was a wicked man, came to be king; and he did not like to see the children of Israel prosper, so he treated them very unkindly indeed, using them ill and making them work much harder than they had strength to do; and at last he commanded that every little boy that was born amongst them should be thrown

into the river. This was a sad cruel order, and it made the poor parents very unhappy; but God, the great God, has ways of saving his people who trust in him when there seems to be no hope at all that man can either see or understand. Now there was among the Israelites a man called Amram, and his wife's name was Jochebed. God gave them a darling little boy, and they loved him so much that they could not bear the thought of his being drowned. For three months his mother contrived to hide him in the house, so that he was not discovered; but at last, when she found that she could do so no longer, she determined to trust him entirely to God's care, and to make a little cradle for him of bulrushes, and let him lie in it whilst it floated among the reeds at the edge of

the water. I dare say she prayed many an earnest prayer to the good God, all the time she was making it, that he would watch over and protect her helpless babe, and her requests were heard; God forsook him not, and, safe in His keeping, he rested as peacefully in his little rushy bed as if he had been hushed to sleep in his fond mother's arms. This poor mother durst not watch him herself, lest her anxious looks should show the treasure she had hid, so she sent his sister to stay at a little distance from the spot, and see what should become of him. Soon after he was laid there, the king's daughter came down to bathe in the river, and, seeing something on the water, she drew it towards her. Then the little babe began to weep, and God put the sweet spirit of pity into the

heart of the king's daughter, and "she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children;" so she sent his sister, who was at a little distance, to find a nurse for him, for she determined to save him and bring him up as her own son; and who do you think was found to take charge of the little infant boy? A happy and a tender nurse indeed, even his own fond mother. Joyfully did she take her dear babe once more into her arms, and gratefully we may believe she thanked the merciful God, who had preserved her child and given her so great a blessing. So she kept him with her, feeding him with the food that God had given her for him, and teaching him, as he grew older, to know and to love the great God his preserver, till the time when Pharaoh's daughter

wished him to live with her; then he became *her* son, and she called his name Moses. My child, will he ever forget what great things the Lord has done for him? Do you not think that whilst he listened to the sweet story which his mother would delight to tell of her fears and her hopes when she trusted his weak cradle on the river's edge, his little heart would be full, at the thought of God's great goodness, and that he would clasp his infant hands and say, "This shall be our God for ever and ever, He will be our guide unto death." Then would his mother's heart exult doubly in his deliverance from the perilous flood; then would she pray *more* fervently that the same Almighty God would still continue to be his guard, would save him from the stormy tempest of bad passions which

might hereafter have power over his soul; from those more terrible waters of sin and wickedness which the Bible speaks of when it says, "Let not the water-floods drown me, and let not the deep swallow me up." "Save me, O Lord; for the waters are come in, even unto my soul."

22.

WHEN Moses grew up to be a man, he did not forget the good God who had watched over his cradle, and whom he had learned to believe in, and to love, as soon as his little heart could feel what a God of power and of mercy he belonged to; and as the Egyptians did not trust in the one true God, but worshipped poor senseless idols, Moses did not like to remain any longer amongst such wicked people. He was

saddened too at seeing how cruelly they used the children of Israel, his own dear countrymen; so he left all the riches and the pleasures of Pharaoh's house, and fled into a country where God was known and worshipped, and here he spent some time happy, in keeping his father-in-law's sheep, and in being kept himself by God, who is the shepherd of us all. One day, while he was employed in watching his flock, the great and glorious Lord appeared to him in a very wonderful manner, and told him, that He was going to send him back into Egypt, to tell Pharaoh that He commanded him to let the poor ill-used Israelites leave his country; and also to let them know that the good God pitied their sorrows, and would lead them, by him, into a much better land, called the land of

Canaan. Moses was at first afraid to go with such a message, but the Lord promised that He would give him power to do all that was needful to be done; and He let him take his brother Aaron with him to be a friend and a helper. My child, when God gives any of his servants a hard task to perform, he always will send them strength, and every thing that they can want, to enable them to do it properly, if they will but seek their strength from Him, and believe firmly that He will give it them: so, with this certain trust, Moses and Aaron set out quite cheerfully, and they were not disappointed, for the good God was ever with them to do for them all that He had promised. Pharaoh was very angry at the message which Moses brought, and said that he would never

let the children of Israel go. Nay, he even used them more cruelly than before; but he was soon made to feel that the children of Israel's God was indeed a God of power. Moses did but stretch out the staff which he held in his hand, at God's command, and all the water in the country was turned into blood; still, however, Pharaoh's heart continued hard, so that a great many other dreadful plagues were brought upon the Egyptians, whilst the Israelites, God's own people, were kept safe and well under their Father's protecting care. Whenever a new punishment was sent upon his country, Pharaoh cried out to Moses, that he would obey God's command, if the Lord would only take away *this* trouble from him; but as soon as ever it was removed, his heart grew hard again as

before; and it was not till the great God had taken away the eldest child out of every family in Egypt, that Pharaoh really permitted the children of Israel to go. But O! is this the story of the Egyptians only? Are there none amongst us that refuse to keep our God's commandments, till His love is shown in taking away some dear delight which we have prized too much, that He may give us the greater blessing of obedient hearts, without which we can never be really entirely happy? Are there no ungrateful Pharaohs now, who, when the good God has heard their prayers, turn against Him in their days of thoughtless joy, and oblige Him to send them sorrow upon sorrow in this world, that they may not weep for ever? Let us learn our lesson here, and when His first correcting stroke is

felt, pray earnestly that it may not be sent in vain; then will our "sorrow be turned into joy," and the language of God's children will be in our hearts and on our lips, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes." "Before I was troubled I went wrong, but now have I kept thy word."

23.

WELL! is it not a pleasant thought, that at last the poor Israelites are set free from their hard slavery, and, instead of being ill-used by cruel Pharaoh, are travelling gently along, under the care of faithful Moses, to the happy country which the good God will give them? But sweeter still is it to know, that not only God's *servant* is their leader, but that the great and

mighty God *Himself* is with them by the way, showing Himself to them as they journey along, to keep up their spirits, and cheer them on the road. For it is written in the Bible, "The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them in the way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light to go by day and night;" so that whenever they looked before them they saw this pillar going with them, and they knew that a Friend was near, with whom they could not but be safe. This was very comforting; for, though they had turned their backs on Pharaoh, they were not yet at home; they had still a long and dreary wilderness to pass through, where many enemies might attack them. And so it is with us, my child, now, even whilst I speak. We are journeying

through a world where there is danger, sorrow, and sin, and which must be passed before we come to the home of peace, and love, and joy, which our great God has prepared for us. This great God now acts the very same kind part by us that he did to the Israelites of old; for he has sent us a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, to set us free from an enemy ten thousand times more cruel than Pharaoh, and who will be our leader and our guide whenever we desire in good earnest to follow in his steps. Our enemy is the devil; young as you are, you have often heard of him, and he desires to have you for his slave; but your loving Saviour has given Himself for you, to save you from his power; He travels along with you every step of your journey; and if you trust in Him, you shall be

safe; He will overthrow *your* enemies, as we read that He *saved* the Israelites in the day of their distress. For now, *they* too came into a great difficulty: no sooner were they gone out of Egypt, than Pharaoh grew more angry than before, and set out with a great army to overtake and bring them back again. Comfortably were they resting by the sea-side when all these cruel people came in sight, and for a moment how terrified were the poor fearful Israelites at their approach! But Moses said unto them, "Fear not; stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever:" then, at the command of the mighty God, he stretched out his hand over the sea, and, in a moment, the waters divided in the middle, so as to make

a safe path for the Israelites to go through. But presently the Egyptians followed—men, horses, and chariots all quickly rushed after them; when suddenly, again God gave the sign; back dashed the sea in all its fury, and whilst the happy Israelites came safe on shore, “the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horse-men, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea; there remained not so much as one of them.”—“And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses.”

24.

On! what a joyful song was that which Moses and his people sang to the good God, after their wonderful

escape from Pharaoh and his large army! Well indeed might they raise their sweetest hymn of praise for such a deliverance; well indeed might their grateful hearts rejoice when they looked upon the dead bodies of the Egyptians, and found that *they*, themselves had still strength and voices left to worship God! And shall not we, my child, joyfully delight to thank Him, often as He turns away sickness, and sorrow, and danger from our path? Shall not we take up the words of Moses and this happy people, and repeat with gratitude, "The Lord is my strength and my song, and He is become my salvation: He is *my* God, my father's God, and I will exalt Him?"—But, ah! too soon do we forget His goodness, though for a little while we love to think of Him, to tell

what great things He has done for us, to feel that we shall never fear again, that we must always trust and love the Almighty Father who has once stretched out His arm to save us. And this was exactly the case with the poor Israelites: thankfully they set out; but as they journeyed onwards, they passed through a part of the wilderness where they found no water: three days they travelled forward, and met with no cool spring to quench their thirst; at last the joyful sight appeared, they came to a clear stream—when, lo! to their great grief they found it bitter.—Now then is their time of trial, and how do they conduct themselves under it? do they pray to the good God to take the bitter taste away, or, bowing their thirsty lips to the running brook, and taking patiently the draught he has prepared, do they say

meekly, "What, shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"—Alas! no; they were displeased, they murmured.—"Then Moses cried to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet; and with this present He made them yet sweeter promises of constant help if they would hearken to the voice of their God, and do that which was right in His sight. And afterwards he led them on to a refreshing place called Elim, where there were shady trees, and wells in abundance of sweet water, and here they rested their weary limbs; here too we will hope they thought of their past fault, and prayed to be forgiven.

But we owe them thanks for the

lesson they have taught us: in *our* journey through life *we* shall come to some places where the waters will be bitter; the sweet taste of pleasure and of joy must sometimes be exchanged for the unpleasant cup of sorrow and of pain; but kind is the hand that reaches forth this cup. Tender is the mother who, in sickness, bestows upon the child of her fond love the medicine that is to bring back health to his weak body, and strength to his wearied limbs; he likes not the bitter taste, but he drinks it patiently, knowing that there is healing in the draught. Thus, our heavenly Father, ten thousand times more kind than the fondest earthly parent, presents us, when He sees fit, with the bitter waters of sorrow and of trial to heal our souls; still, however, there is a

sweetener of these bitter waters at all times near them; this sweetener is God's own word of comfort and of hope: we turn to it in sorrow with double earnestness and love, we mix some of its sweet promises with our tears, and we think upon His commandments to do them; *then* we begin to feel that the *bitterness* of our grief is past, and, like the children of Israel at Elim, we "find rest unto our souls."

25.

WERE I to tell you all the wonderful things that happened to the children of Israel in their journey through the wilderness, I should be fearful of tiring your little feeble mind, and of its being too weak to understand or to enjoy the description of the good God's great mercies; so I think I must

shorten my account, and only let you know small parts of these delightful stories. Indeed, I am sorry to repeat the same history of ingratitude and discontent over and over again; but so it happened, that as God was never tired of giving, so these discontented people were never tired of murmuring and grumbling when they came to any little distress or difficulty. Sometimes they began to wish themselves in Egypt again, where they said they had plenty of meat (forgetting all they had suffered there), and then their kind Father would supply their wants by bringing to them large flocks of birds called quails, for their daily food, and a sort of bread called manna, which in His great goodness he rained down for them from heaven. At another time they were very angry

because they had no water to drink, and then the good God bade Moses strike the hard rock with his rod, and immediately a plentiful stream gushed out, so that all the people could drink. Again, there came some enemies in their way, who wanted to prevent their going into the good land that God had promised them; but the Lord here too was their friend, and He fought for them, and struck down all those who would have done them harm. Now all these things are intended to remind us of still greater mercies that we are every day receiving from the hands of the same great Lord, and to teach us not to "murmur as they also murmured," when for a little minute our wants seem not to be supplied. When they were very hungry, though they saw no bread around them, He caused it to fall

from heaven to keep them alive. When *we* are hungry, we have food brought to our tables in quite as wonderful a manner; for the good God causes the corn to grow day by day out of the earth from a very tiny seed, and waters it with His showers, and ripens it with His sun, without which we could never have one loaf of bread for our support; and the cattle and the birds, which are our meat, are kept alive and fed by Him hour by hour, so that we may not want. But this bread of the Israelites too is meant to remind us of some blessing of our own, greater still than even this. Our loving Saviour Jesus Christ calls Himself "the bread of life"—bread for the soul, without which it would die for ever; for He says, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven,"

“that a man may eat thereof, and not die.” Now, dear child! this bread is given to *us*, and if we will but receive it into our hearts, it will always be our strength and our support, both in this world and in the next. When you are older, I hope the good God will enable you to understand these holy and important things much better; to see too, how the rock was intended to remind us of this same strong and mighty Saviour, and how He pours out His Holy Spirit into the minds of His humble and happy children, when they feel the want of such refreshment on their journey. You will also find that *you* have enemies who would prevent your coming to the happy country which the good Lord desires to give you; and you may hope, from this story, that He will fight for you

as He did for the children of Israel, and prevent your wicked feelings of pride, and passion, and selfishness, and discontent, from having any power to do you harm.

26.

WHEN the Israelites had been about three months upon their journey, the great God Almighty called His faithful servant Moses up the top of a very high hill, Mount Sinai, and there He appeared to him in a cloud, and spoke aloud, so that all the people might hear. The words that He there spoke were very precious words, for he told the Israelites what things they were to do, and what they were *not* to do, if they wished to please Him; and these words are called the Ten Commandments. Four of these commandments were to

teach them, more particularly than they had ever yet been taught, how they were to love and serve the good God who had done such great things for them ; and the other six were to tell them, that if they really felt this love, they must show that they did so by trying to get the better of all selfish and wicked passions, and by doing to every creature in the world just what they should like to have done to themselves if they could change places with them. Now, my dear little child, what a happy world this would be if we all *so* loved God, and *so* loved one another! This is *our* duty now, as it was theirs at that time, and we will pray to our heavenly Father to make us every day more desirous and willing to do it. When God had spoken these Ten Commandments, He was so very good as to

write them upon two tables of stone, that they might never be forgotten; and He desired Moses to make a tabernacle, that is, a sort of tent, in which these two tables of stone were to be kept. This tent was a very holy place, for here the sacrifices were to be offered in remembrance of the one great Sacrifice which our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ was afterwards to make of His life for the sins of the whole world; and Aaron and his sons were to be called priests, and to attend upon this sacred place. In the days we live in, instead of tents we have holy buildings called churches, where the people meet together to join in praises to the great and good God; and here too there are faithful servants of God, called His ministers, who pray with and for His people, and read to them out of His

own best book, and teach them to understand and obey it. These ministers of God we will love and honour, we will pray for them, and diligently listen to their instructions; we will delight to flock together to the happy dwelling where they serve Him, its very name shall be dear to us, for it is called God's house: there He loves to look down upon His people, and to hear their prayers; there shall He often find us with hearts and thoughts fixed on Him alone; our hands and our voices shall be lifted up in His name; we will not need to be reminded of this service, but we will count it our delight and our joy to "go into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise, to be thankful unto Him and speak good of His name. For the Lord is gracious, His mercy is ever,

lasting, and His truth endureth from generation to generation."

27.

A GREAT many years indeed the children of Israel continued on their journey to the good land which their God had promised them, and during this time their numbers increased very much ; but a great many of those who set out from Egypt died before they reached the country to which they were going, and among the rest faithful Moses, who was now grown very old. Before his death he wrote the account of all that the great God had done for His people ever since the time when the world was made, and this account we now read in the Bible. When this was finished, the Lord told him to go up to the top of a high hill,

from whence he could see all the sweet country towards which the Israelites were journeying ; and when he had been indulged with this pleasant sight, his heavenly Father blessed him still further by taking him out of this world into a very much happier land than the earthly one of Canaan. Then the Lord made another faithful servant of his, called Joshua, the leader of His people, and after fighting for them and conquering a great many of their enemies, he brought them into Canaan ; and the people of " Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua." This did not, however, continue to be the case always ; for we read again, that they often afterwards forsook the One true God, and joined with some of the wicked nations who were still left in Canaan, in worshipping idols. When

they did so they were never happy, and, to bring them back to their right senses, and make them remember their fault with sorrow, the Almighty God would often make them feel the hard hand of their enemies upon them ; nor was it till they turned to Him in repentance that he would again deliver them from their attacks. Just so it is with *us*, my child ! When we turn away our hearts from the only true and good God, then our wicked enemies get power over us, leading us into great wickedness and bringing us into sad misery ; and it is not till we turn in real and great sorrow of heart to our Almighty Saviour that we are delivered by Him from their tormenting power. — Amongst the enemies of the Israelites were some people called Philistines, very wicked idolaters ; and once when

the Israelites were in great danger from them, the good God raised them up a helper, to fight for them, whose name was Samson. To him the Lord gave very great strength, *so* great, that he was the strongest man that ever lived; and by this power which his God had given him, he one day killed a fierce lion that came out against him, just as easily as if it had been a little harmless lamb. We are told too, that once when he was taken prisoner by the Philistines, they tied him with very strong cords fast to a rock, that he might not escape; but the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and then the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands. Another time he took up the jaw-bone of an ass, and killed a thou-

sand of his enemies with it directly; and some time after, when the Philistines thought that they had shut him up quite safely, in a town called Gaza, he carried away the heavy gates and posts upon his shoulders with perfect ease, and so gained his liberty. All this power became Samson's because he looked to the Lord alone for his strength, and desired to have it *only*, that he might employ it in God's service; and doubt not, dear child, but that strength will be given to *us* also, if we seek it from the same source, and desire it for the same purpose; *strength*, not of body, but of soul; *strength*, by which we shall obtain victory over our great enemy the devil, whilst we confess that all our power is of God, and give Him all the glory and the praise.

But Samson did not always obey the

Lord as he should have done, so the Lord made him feel the consequences of his sins by causing all his strength to go from him; and when this was gone, God gave him up to the Philistines, who bound him with heavy chains, and put out his eyes in prison. Then Samson in his distress prayed to the Lord, and his strength was restored to him again; so then he determined to spend the remainder of that strength in the Lord's service, who had given it him; and one day, when a very great number of the Philistines were gathered together to worship their idol in the house where he was, Samson put his hands upon the pillars that supported the house, and pulled it down upon the heads of the idol and of all the people: thus they all perished, and Samson himself fell with them.—You

and I, my little child, like Samson, have no strength but that which our good God is pleased to give us: if we are left to ourselves, we are sure to fall into the hands of our enemies; and if we turn away from God, we may be very sure all His strength *will* depart from us; we will therefore look to Him every moment for His support, and employ all the powers that He gives us, to His praise; we will love to feel and confess our own weakness, and every day shall begin with this heart-felt declaration, "I will go forth in the strength of the Lord God, and will make mention of His righteousness only."

28.

I TOLD you a short time since, of the faithful servants of God who were called priests, and whose happy duty

it was to serve the Lord always in His temple, and to make their offerings there, in remembrance of the one great sacrifice (which we must always love to think upon) of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was afterwards to shed His blood upon the cross for you and for me, and for all mankind. One of these faithful servants was called Eli; he was now old, and, having long served the Lord with all his heart, he wished that his children should ever do the same; but, alas! he had indulged them foolishly when they were young, and had not with true fatherly affection corrected their evil tempers and bad passions whilst they were children; so now it was the sorrow of his old age that they did not serve and obey the great God as he desired. Oh! believe yourself happy, my dear child, whose

fond parents *so* love you, that early do they chasten you with real Christian love, who train your infant steps to tread the ways of God betimes, and call forth the tear of sorrow now, in punishment of your faults, that you may be the child of a dearer Father hereafter, even of the blessed Saviour Jesus Christ himself. Some such fond parents we read of in the Bible, and one in particular I now remember, of whom I delight to read, and think, and talk. Hannah (for so was she called) loved the good God with all her heart, and desired much to have a dear baby whom she might teach to know and love Him also; but she waited long before this wish of her heart was granted. Her husband tried to comfort her, and she felt all his kindness, but she knew that the best of all comforts comes

from God, so she went to His house, and there she humbly prayed to Him, and told Him all her desire : she promised too, that, if this dear son was granted her, she would bring him up to God's service, and would look upon him as belonging to the Lord, and only given into her arms for a little while ; and having prayed her prayer very earnestly, she went home comforted. By and by the good God granted her request, and a sweet, lovely little boy was born, whose name she called Samuel. And now she directly thought upon her promise, and from his very earliest infancy she devoted him to the service of the heavenly Father to whom he belonged. So with a very thankful heart she took him, whilst he was quite a young child still, to present him before the great God in His temple ; and

when she had joyfully praised the Lord for this great favour that she had obtained, she left her dear boy with good old Eli, that he might, even in his infant years, be always found at God's altar. Fancy if you can, a sweeter sight than to see this little heavenly-minded child, by the side of the good old priest, lifting up his infant hands and heart to the great and glorious God; and think of the happy sound to his fond mother's ear, to hearken to his little lisping tongue whilst it asked a blessing from that God, even before it had well learnt to say the words of its humble little prayer. Every year his tender parents came up to join with him in these happy offerings of prayer and praise, and every year his mother brought him a little coat as a proof of her fond love. And will not you say,

whilst hearing these sweet things, "I too will, like the infant Samuel, delight to raise my little hands and heart to God, and lisp out all His praise; I too will be found in the temple of the Lord as a weak but loving child whom my Saviour has invited to come near to Him. Yes, dear infant! be it thy happiness, like Samuel, early to seek His face; for thou, like him, hast been devoted to thy Maker's service from the first moment of thy little life. Ere thou couldst raise thy hands, or utter one sound to His praise, a mother's arms conveyed thee to the temple of thy God, a mother's heart in silence promised to train thee for His service; fond friends confirmed the vow; and, ere thy tongue was loosed, the word was past which binds thee to thy Lord for ever!

29.

BUT we have not yet finished all that is written in the Bible of the touching story of the infant Samuel: sweetly was he one night sleeping on his little couch, when a soft voice came to his ear, and called "Samuel;" he started up, and seeing no one by his pillow, ran to Eli, and said, "Here am I, for thou calledst me." And Eli answered, "I called not, lie down again; and he went and lay down." Again the same voice sounded in his ears, and again the child awaked; as before, he went to Eli, and as before was received with the answer, "I called not my son, lie down again." Now the voice was a holier voice than Eli's, for it was the Lord Himself that spoke; and again the third time he heard it

plainly; then, fully convinced that it *was* Eli, he left his little bed once more, and said, "Here am I, for thou *didst* call me." But Eli now perceived that the Lord had called the child, therefore Eli said unto Samuel, "Go, lie down; and it shall be if He call thee that thou shalt say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, "Speak, for thy servant heareth." Sad was the message which he now received; for his God was come to declare to him the afflictions which would fall on Eli's family because of the wickedness of Eli's sons. Ah! had their unthinking father spared them not from punishment in infancy, this sorrow had per-

haps never visited his house ; but now it must fall upon the guilty, and little Samuel must deliver the sad tidings. So, when morning dawned, the child arose from his bed ; and when the good old priest with fond expressions asked him what thing the Lord had said unto him, he hesitated no longer, but told him everything, hiding nothing from him. Samuel loved Eli dearly, for Eli had been to him as the best of fathers, and he grieved to give him pain ; but this father and this child loved with true and good affection, for their hearts were even *more* set upon the Lord than upon each other, and this right love softened the distress of both ; it encouraged Samuel to tell his message faithfully, and it strengthened good old Eli to receive it : and now, instead of murmurs and reproaches,

we only hear these words from Eli's aged lips, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." Patient mourner! thou knowest and lovest the hand that smites thee, and that hand shall wipe away all thy tears. After this we read that afflictions came upon him, as the Lord had said, and his two sons were slain in battle by their enemies; but Eli was old, and his troubles were soon mercifully ended. And Samuel grew up in the favour of his God, and the Lord put His Spirit within him to guide and direct him, and by the power of this Spirit he enabled him to foretell things to come, and Samuel was called a prophet of the Lord. My child! a prophet thou wilt *never* be, nor will the voice of God sound outwardly to thine ears, as to the highly

favoured Samuel, but in thine heart His word is ever sounding; each time that heart informs thee thou art doing wrong, God warns thee by His awful voice speaking through thy wounded conscience; when thou doest right thy heart condemneth thee not, and conscience sweetly tells thee that thy "God is well pleased." Listen to its gentlest whispers, obey its earliest call; it will point out to thee the way in which thou shouldst go; it will warn thee of the dangers thou shouldst avoid; hearken to and obey it when young, it shall counsel and support thee when thou art old. Be Samuel's conduct and Samuel's language ever thine, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth."

30.

It was whilst Samuel was alive that the people of Israel first desired to have a king set over them, and Samuel was commanded by the Lord to fix on one, whose name was Saul. The people were very much pleased with the choice; and when first Saul began to reign, he feared and obeyed the great God, and success was given him when he led his people to fight against God's enemies. But after a time his heart grew hard and proud; *then* the Lord's blessing was no longer with him, and he became very unhappy indeed. Then, too, the wicked Philistines, who would not own the one true God, came up to fight against God's people, and kept them in great fear, and threatened to make them their slaves, so that all the

nation, both king and people, were in great distress. But though Saul was wicked, God did not forsake all the Israelites on his account; and in His great goodness He now raised them up a friend and deliverer, where they little expected to find one. This deliverer came out of a humble place called Bethlehem; it was not the great Deliverer of all, who was afterwards born there, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; but it was one who was meant to remind the people of Him, and whom in the Bible is sometimes called the man after God's own heart. You may be sure, therefore, that he was one who loved the Lord God very truly, and was blessed by Him. Humble and happy was his employment; and never were his days more blissful than while he was wandering in the green fields

and valleys near his little cottage, keeping his father's sheep, and singing to the notes of his loved harp, sweet psalms and hymns, which the Spirit of God put into his mind, in praise of the true Shepherd Jesus Christ, who was by and by to come and lead His sheep into the safe fold. Young David little thought of courts and battles, till one day when he was sent by his old father, the good Jesse, to take a message to his brothers who were soldiers in the camp. Whilst he was there, he heard the haughty words of a very great and powerful Philistine called Goliath, who used every day to speak boastingly against the God of Israel; and because he was so very tall and strong as to be called a giant, all the Israelites were afraid of him; not one was to be found who dared to fight him; and thus

God's people were kept in fear, and the Philistines triumphed. But young David, though he was mild and gentle as the lambs he tended, could not bear to hear his God insulted; and the great Lord whom he so loved put a holy boldness into his heart, which made him afraid of nothing in so good a cause. So he entreated to be taken to king Saul, and, when there, he humbly begged permission to fight, his single arm against the giant's, in defence of the Lord's people. Now the king had promised rich presents to any one who would deliver him from this wicked idolater, but no one had hitherto been found. Very much indeed was he surprised when he saw one so young and weak as David, present himself before him, and he tried to turn him from his purpose; but David

said unto Saul, "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock; and I went out after him and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he arose against me I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." Then Saul said unto David, "Go, and the Lord be with thee." And truly *did* the Lord go with him, and in God's strength did David fight; he took neither sword nor spear, nor any other armour for

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his defence, but gathered a few smooth stones out of the brook, and thus he appeared before the proud Goliath. Goliath little knew how the God of all power can save the weakest of his servants by His mighty arm, without any other help, if He sees fit to do so; so he laughed scornfully when he saw young David come before him; but his laughter was only for a moment, for just as Goliath was rushing upon the youthful shepherd with his sword and spear, the stone which David threw, smote the haughty giant in the forehead, and he fell suddenly to the earth. Then even his own sword was turned against him, for with it his head was divided from his body, and young David laid it before the king. The Philistines now fled away before God's people, and great was the rejoicing in

the whole land. Glorious triumph! by which God's enemies were confounded and His people delivered; ever may its remembrance be treasured in our hearts, to kindle there the same holy boldness in the cause of our God which glowed in the breast of the young and pious David! *We* too, my child, must fight the Lord's battles, and in His strength only must we go forth. Our enemies are malicious, and they are strong; sin, the world, and the devil, are all in arms against us; but we fight under a Leader who is all-powerful, who has trod down all enemies under His feet; conquest will be ours if we desert not this "Captain of our salvation." Weak and powerless in ourselves, we are encouraged to say and to feel, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." The

remembrance of past mercies shall furnish us with never-failing hope, in every prospect of danger. Like David, we have been delivered from "the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear." Our wicked passions have never yet had the complete dominion over us. Like David too, we will go forth boldly against the great enemy of our salvation; our help shall be in God alone, our strength will we ascribe unto the Lord, our joyful confession shall for ever be, "Through Thee will we overthrow our enemies, and in Thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. For I will not trust in my bow, it is not my sword that shall help me; but it is Thou that savest us from our enemies, and puttest them to confusion that hate us."

31.

AFTER David had, through God's help, been victorious over the Philistines, his outward situation underwent a great, but not a very happy change; he was taken away from his peaceful sheep, and for a time was held in honour in the king's palace. He had, however, one blessing at all times with him, which no king could give or take away; for it is written, "David behaved himself wisely in all his ways, and the Lord was with him." But why was not he as happy in the king's palace as in his lowly cottage watching his little flock? Was he not now great, and rich; and high in favour with all the people? had he not still his harp for his companion, and could he not strike its notes as before, to the

praises of his God? Above all, was not the Spirit of the Lord still with him, breathing into his soul those strains of thankful love to his great Maker, which to this day God's faithful people delight to read and think upon? He had, indeed, *this* comfort; and in *all* the changes of his *often* changing life, his harp and his sweet psalms were his ever dear delight. But David found that man's favour may be quickly lost, and that in riches and in power there is no real joy. Saul, who had all these in his possession, could not rest in peace, his poor unhappy mind was his continual torment; and now that David was in favour with the people, the king began to hate him, and to be jealous of the love they bore him. He forgot the obligations which he owed him, and at last he sought his life. So David then

was glad to leave the palace, and the Lord continued to watch over him, and to save him from every danger with which Saul threatened him. After this king's death, God caused David himself to be king over the Israelites; and when he was in this high station he used all his power to spread the knowledge and glory of God amongst his people, and continued to pray to Him and praise Him as before; but in his own family he was not very happy: sad quarrels arose amongst his children; and one of his sons, named Absalom, was so wicked as to take up arms and fight against the dear father who had always loved him. But the great God did not suffer such dreadful conduct to go unpunished, and never, never does He want ways of bringing the proud spirit low. One day, as this unkind

son was riding along upon his mule under some spreading trees, his long hair, of which he had been very vain, got entangled amongst the boughs of a shady oak; he tried to get it loose, but did not succeed; on went the animal, and left him hanging from one of the thick branches. In this condition a soldier found him (one of his father's soldiers against whom he had been fighting), pierced his body through with a spear, and killed him immediately. But ah! his father David's love was still great, even towards this offending child; he grieved with very bitter grief when he found that Absalom was indeed dead, and was heard to say, "Would that I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" Is there not, dear child, a greater than this earthly David, who has shown even

dearer love than this? Is there not One who so sorrows for the sad wickedness of His people, that with exceeding dear and tender pity He has given up life itself for His ungrateful children? Shall we think upon this king of Israel, and not remember what great things *our* King has done for us, even the King of heaven, the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? And since, like Absalom, we have rebelled against Him, shall we not every one of us “arise and go to our Father, and say unto Him, Father, we have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and are no more worthy to be called thy sons?” Yes, dear child, if we thus approach Him with *real* sorrow, He will yet have pity, many times as we have all grieved Him; He will receive us with the fond tenderness of a for-

giving father ; He will say to our great comfort, as He has often said of old, " Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace."

32.

WHEN good king David was old, and likely to die, he called his son Solomon to him, and in the fondest words entreated him always to remember and love the God of his fathers, and to serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind ; and when he had done this, he prayed very earnestly to the Almighty Lord to bless his dear child with a teachable and understanding heart, and to keep him always in the right way. Then he praised the good God for all the mercies of his past life, and sweetly closed his eyes in peace. After he was dead, Solomon was made king, and remembering the

words of his dear father, the very first thing he prayed for was the spirit of wisdom, that he might always do that which was right, and rule his people well; for he said, "I am but a little child; I know not how to go out or come in." Then the Lord was pleased with his humble spirit, and loved him because he had asked for wisdom to do right, instead of seeking for riches, or power, or pleasure; and He granted his request, and blessed him, so that he was the wisest man that ever lived. He was rich and powerful too; and he built a beautiful house, or temple, to worship God in; and when it was finished, he prayed a sweet and solemn prayer in it, which I hope you will some time read. After him there were a great many kings in Israel, some of whom were very wicked,

and many of them forsook the worship of the one true God, and bowed the knee to idols. In the reign of one of these, called Ahab, there was a very good man named Elijah, a man who loved and served the Lord, so he received from God the spirit to foretell things to come, and he was therefore called a prophet. Once when he went with a message from God to reprove the people of Israel for their wickedness, the king and queen desired to kill him; but the Lord preserved him, and bid him safely in a very lonely place; where, however, there seemed to be no food. But Elijah well knew that if he went there by God's command he should not want, and so it proved; for the birds of the air became God's messengers, and brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and

meat in the evening ; and he drank out of the water of the brook. Now these very birds that fed him, being ravens, loved themselves to eat the food they were intrusted with for his use, but God, you see, did not permit them to touch it, and so tamed their little hungry mouths that they brought it safely to the prophet. Ah, my loved child! there is not one creature that the good God has made, but feels the power of His bidding and shows the wonders of His hand : we will study the history of their little lives, that we may praise His goodness more, and see with grateful wonder how His fatherly kindness reaches to the very lowest of His works. They will teach us many lessons ; we shall learn a secret here which the good Elijah learned in his solitary abode, to fear no want even

though no supply appears to be at hand. Our blessed Saviour sends us to them for this very purpose : " Take no thought," he says, " for your life, what ye shall eat, neither for the body what ye shall put on. Consider the ravens ; for they neither sow nor reap, which neither have storehouse nor barn, and God feedeth them : how much more are ye better than the fowls !"

33.

We left Elijah, in our last story, thankfully receiving his daily bread from heaven by the mouth of the little birds, who were commissioned to feed him, and quenching his thirst from the running stream ; but by and by it happened that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain for a long time. Then the Lord commanded him

to leave that place, and remove to one called Zarephath; and He told him that a poor widow woman who lived there should supply him with food. Elijah never doubted the truth of God's word, but set out directly; and no sooner had he reached the gate of the city, than he met the very woman that the Lord had told him of, gathering a few sticks for her little fire. As soon as he saw her, he made his petition, and asked her to give him a morsel of bread and some water, for he was faint with his journey; but she told him, in very great distress, that she had but a handful of meal left in her house, and a very little oil in a vessel, and that she was gathering those sticks to assist her in baking a small cake for her son, that she and the child might eat together once more before

they died, for the famine was great in the land, and no more food was to be had because there had been no rain. But still Elijah begged to share her provisions, and he told her for her comfort, to feel no fear, for that his God, the God of Israel, had promised that her barrel of meal should not be empty, nor should the oil be all used till the rain should come, and plenty be restored throughout the country. Now this poor heathen woman had, till then, never heard of the God of Israel; but she was kindly disposed in her heart to relieve Elijah's wants, and she hesitated no longer; so she made the cake, and invited him to share it with her; and soon she found that Elijah's God *was* a God of truth and power indeed, for the meal did not waste, and the oil still continued in

the vessel, as if it had been untouched. Very soon after this, the son of the poor widow fell sick and died, and in very great affliction his sorrowing mother ran to the prophet to tell him all her distress. Then Elijah's heart was touched, and he prayed to the Almighty God in whom he trusted, that her grief might be removed, and her dear child restored to life again. And the great God heard his prayer, and gave him power to raise him up from his bed of death. So Elijah embraced the child, and once more the bright colour returned to his pale cheek, and his eyes opened again to the light of this world; then he carried him to his delighted mother, and in a transport of gratitude she acknowledged that the prophet's God was Lord indeed; and no doubt she was ever afterwards one

of His humble and devoted children. Elijah continued to be a faithful servant of his God for many years, and underwent much persecution from the wicked king and queen ; but at last his sorrows ceased, for he was taken up to heaven in a very wonderful manner without dying, and thither his cruel enemies could not follow him. There, my child, all tears and sorrows cease; there, are joys such as eye has never seen, nor ear heard, which Jesus Christ, our blessed Saviour, is preparing for those happy children, and those long-tried and faithful servants, who through life have loved Him and trusted in His tender mercies.

34.

At the very moment that the great and good God was pleased to take the

prophet Elijah up to heaven without dying, the prophet's servant, named Elisha, was standing by his dear master, and talking with him of their approaching separation; and upon the removal of Elijah, the Spirit of the Lord rested upon the servant, as it had before done upon the master, and Elisha became the prophet of the great God. He too was a faithful messenger from God to the wicked people in Israel; and very sad things he was often obliged to tell them in order to turn them from their sins; for, alas! they were now become a very sinful people indeed. Even the dear children whom God gave them, they took no pains to train up to His service and glory; and so, instead of their being happy and humble little creatures, who delight to sing God's praises, and

to love and honour every thing that belongs to Him, we now find that they became proud and disrespectful, thinking themselves wiser than the wise, and better than the good; daring so far as to laugh at the excellence which they had not sense to comprehend, even too when it appeared in the person of old age, which should always be respected. For we read, that one day, when the prophet Elisha was going on a journey, there came out into the road which he was travelling, a great number of these proud and naughty children, who laughed at, and made a joke of the good prophet, crying after him, "Go up, thou bald-head: go up, thou bald-head." But very soon their wicked mirth was turned into fear and agony; for the prophet had but looked round to re-

· prove them in the name of the great Master whom he served, when “there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tore forty and two children of them.” Dreadful and striking lesson! Early may it teach those whom *I* love, how dear in the sight of God are true piety and goodness; how the thinly scattered hairs of gray-headed age should be ever looked upon with reverence and respect; and how each little child is called on to lend its feeble aid to limbs that time has stiffened, and to bow the ear to those lessons which old age can so well teach. Let humility, modesty, and piety, be the ornament of your childhood. Never, never may impiety and disrespect be heard from lips which have so lately learned to sound forth praise. A few short years ago, and all was mute;

but God hath unloosed the tongue which spake not, and hath bidden the infant voice ascend to heaven. Rejoice then, ye happy children, in your great privilege, and let no other sounds ever come forth from your lips but those of innocence, gentleness, and kindness. Whilst your first breath is spent in the praises of your Lord and Saviour, let every action of your little lives show forth the honour which you give unto His name; see that His ministers be ever revered with lowly meekness; honour in them the divine Master whom they serve; regard them with fervent gratitude, for they watch tenderly over your souls; incline your ear to their instructions, for they are the messengers of God's word. Our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ has shown us what love and what respect we

should ever testify to God's faithful servants, for His sake, when He says, in speaking to His earliest Apostles, "He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me."

35.

IN reading the history of God's people, we find that a certain part of them (who had lived at Jerusalem and were called Jews) were once permitted by the great God, when they had for a length of time neglected Him and been very wicked, to be taken prisoners by a heathen king named Nebuchadnezzar, who reigned over a place called Babylon, and worshipped idols. *All* those, however, who were taken away from their loved country were not alike forgetful of God, for amongst them was a very holy man called Daniel, who

was a prophet of the Almighty's, and was so wise and good that even the heathen king respected and loved him, and raised him to great power in his kingdom. There were also three others whose names were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, whose histories are written in the Bible. These men remained always faithful to the one true God, and served Him openly in the midst of every danger and distress. One day, king Nebuchadnezzar had a large image made of gold, before which he commanded all the people to fall down, and worship; and, to make them afraid of disobeying his orders, he gave out publicly, every where, that whoever should refuse to do so should be thrown into the middle of a burning fiery furnace, from which there should be no means of getting out. This was

awful intelligence to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who were in Babylon, and who loved their own true God too well to pretend to worship a poor senseless idol; they chose rather to die the most dreadful of all deaths, than to do what the great God had forbidden; so, when it was told to the king that they would not bow their knees to his idol, they spoke boldly before him and said, "O Nebuchadnezzar, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king: but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Then was the king very angry indeed, and he commanded his people to make the furnace seven times hotter than it

had ever been made before, and to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and cast them into it. All this was done as he desired; but who can describe the wonder of the king, and all the people who were with him, when, instead of seeing them destroyed in a moment, they beheld not only the three men whom they had put in, unbound and walking safely in the midst of the fire, but a *fourth* also with them; "and the form of the fourth was like the Son of God." Yes, my child, this was no other than the great God Himself, condescending to take the form of a man, that He might be seen by them and walk with them, and keep them unhurt amidst the burning flames; and His presence indeed saved them, and prevented the fire from having any power to touch them; for the Bible tells us,

that when Nebuchadnezzar, astonished at the sight he beheld, came to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and called the three servants of the most high God out of the midst of the fire, he found, to his still greater surprise, that not "a hair of their head was singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them." Then was the king's heart touched, and he openly acknowledged the power, and blessed the mercy of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who had thus delivered His servants that trusted in Him ; and he sent forth another order very different from the last he had pronounced, that, if any people should presume to speak against their God, they should be cut in pieces, and their houses destroyed ; " for," he added,

“ there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.” Nebuchadnezzar too advanced Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to great power and riches in his kingdom ; but what were all the riches and honours that he could give, compared to the treasure they possessed in the favour which their God had shown them ; and in having hearts which so steadfastly trusted in Him, that not even the thought of the most dreadful torments could make them for an instant turn away from His service ? To us, my child, what lessons of comfort and instruction are written here ! and let us pray that we may not receive them in vain. In some way or other we must all suffer in our Christian course ; our road to heaven must often carry us through pain, and trials, and afflictions ; but it is a safe and blessed

road; it ends in everlasting rest; it is succeeded by an abundance of joy. When the fond mother's correcting hand restrains the selfish inclinations of the child she loves, though restraint may for the moment give a pang, yet will the little heart again expand with truer joy, when, through these means, the rising passion has been quelled, and selfish will no longer clouds the inward sunshine. Thus will it ever be through life: through self-denial we shall gain peace; pure, calm, heavenly peace will be our companion, whatever be our sufferings or our sorrows, if we keep close to the commands of our God; for the same Son of God, though we see Him not, will walk with us, as with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in every trial, and will bring us out unhurt through them all. He has given

us the promise of His constant presence, and His word is sure; "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."

36.

IN our last story it was very pleasant to find how king Nebuchadnezzar's heart was touched with the kindness and power of the One true God, so that he acknowledged Him to be the Lord, and caused others to acknowledge Him also; but, alas! he had still much to learn; he had not yet been taught to see and to feel that

every thing good which we seem to possess, either in our own hearts, or in the world about us, is God's good gift, and is never to be looked upon and boasted of as our own : so now, to humble his pride, and to teach him this most necessary truth, he received a very painful, but a very useful lesson. One night when he was in his bed, he dreamed a most extraordinary dream ; he was sure, that, like Pharaoh's dream, it had a meaning, which he could not understand, and he sent to all the wise men about his court to see if they could explain it for him, but they were none of them able : at last the wise and holy Daniel came in, on whom God's Spirit rested, and this enabled him to declare to the king, that, because his kingdom was now great and powerful, and his heart lifted up with pride on this ac-

count, a terrible change would, ere long, befall him; for he should be driven from men, and his dwelling should be with the beasts of the field, and he should be made to eat grass as oxen, and be wet with the dew of heaven, till he should be brought to feel, and to confess, the entire power and glory of the great God alone. Then Daniel advised him to lose no time in humbling himself before the Lord, and repenting truly of his past faults; but it seems as if the king either did not believe the warning he had received, or did not profit by this kind caution; for, about a year afterwards, we find him walking in his palace and boasting of his greatness and his riches; then all at once there came a voice from heaven, and told him that none of these were any longer

his, and that he should be changed into the appearance of a beast, instead of a man, till he should know that "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." Now, we know that what the Lord ordains comes quite certainly to pass, and so it was that poor Nebuchadnezzar was in that very hour "driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws." But if the change in his outward condition was now sad, a much happier change soon took place within, for which he had cause to be thankful to the latest moment of his life ; for his heart became lowly and humble, and he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and blessed and praised

God in his sorrows, and confessed meekly, as he ought to do, that the greatest and the best men on earth are nothing before God, and that God alone should have all praise and glory. So, when Nebuchadnezzar was brought into this state of mind, to feel his own littleness and sinfulness as it deserved, his merciful and kind Father not only forgave him, but restored him again to his former appearance and situation ; and here too let *us* praise God, and rejoice in the altered feelings of the humbled king, whilst we read the confession of his changed thoughts, for he says, "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, and extol, and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment." O my child ! whilst we tremble at his sad punishment, let us remember that we may

become like him at any moment, if the great God see fit. What are our senses, our health, our possessions, or dispositions to do right, but so many undeserved gifts which we are constantly receiving from the good God, and for which we can make Him no returns but the acknowledgment that they are His, and the thankful praises of very humble hearts? He can deprive us of these in a moment; but if He do not this, we may be very sure that pride, suffered to live within us here, will shut us out of the kingdom of heaven hereafter. Nebuchadnezzar's words then shall ever live in our memories, and be engraven on our souls, "Those that walk in pride He is able to abase;" and, in our days of prosperity and well-doing, our joyful, humble song shall ever be, "Not unto

us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give the praise."

37.

AFTER Nebuchadnezzar was dead, his son Belshazzar became king, and a sad change it was indeed for his people; for he was a wicked man who did not love or fear the good God; but spent all his time in feasting and riot, living only for what *he* thought *pleasure*, instead of thinking about *duty*; but, poor man! he was soon stopped short in his thoughtless way of going on; for one day, when he was thus engaged amongst his favourites, he looked up, and saw, to his great terror, the fingers of a man's hand writing something upon the wall of the room where he was sitting. Then he started up in great fear, and trembled so that he

could hardly stand; nor were his terrors lessened when he found the meaning of the words that were written: these could not be read by any of the learned people of his own country; but the great God, from whom the writing came, gave to His servant Daniel the Spirit to understand them; He gave him boldness too, to tell the king the reason for which they were sent; for, as soon as he came into his presence, he reminded him of what had befallen his father Nebuchadnezzar on account of his pride, and then told him that he had not taken warning by his example, and humbled his own heart, though he knew all these things, but had worshipped gods of gold and silver, and had not glorified the only true God; therefore the hand which

he had seen was sent by Him, and the meaning of the words which were written were, that the great God saw how entirely he was wanting in the spirit of love, and gratitude, and obedience to his Maker which he ought to feel, and would take away his kingdom and give it to another people. These afflictions happened to him exactly as Daniel had foretold; for that very night, whilst he thought himself safe in his palace, a large army belonging to a people called the Persians, got possession of the place, and took his kingdom from him, and put Belshazzar to death.—Now this sad story, like every other which we find in the Bible, is written for our instruction, for yours and mine, my child; and may the God of all wisdom give us grace to read it aright, and profit by its ad-

vice. Though we are not rulers over a great kingdom, we have each of us a spirit within us to watch over, and duties to attend to; now, if we neglect these, to give ourselves up to pleasure, we are living a life as displeasing to God as wicked Belshazzar was, of whom we have just been reading; and though we are not in any danger of worshipping poor lifeless images of gold and silver, as he did, yet if, in our secret hearts, we love any creature that God has given us for our use and comfort more than God Himself, then we are, in our heavenly Father's sight, worshipping something besides that Father who should have the *best* love which we have power to give. We do not see a hand writing our sentence upon the walls of our house, but the great

God does, day by day, and hour by hour, mark well all our thoughts, and words, and actions; and we are warned by the Scriptures that an enemy is at *our* gates, as he was at Belshazzar's, ready to take away from us a better kingdom than was ever within *his* possession, even that heavenly and happy kingdom which our malicious enemy the devil desires to deprive us of. Let us however take courage; for never will he have power to hurt us so long as we secure that blessed Saviour for our friend, who encourages all His humble and loving children with these words of comfort, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

38.

THE name of the king who became master of Belshazzar's kingdom, was Darius, and he soon found out how excellent and wise a man the prophet Daniel was; and because he loved him and thought highly of him, he gave him great power in that country. Now this honour, which Daniel received, very much offended several of the princes and great men of Darius's court, for they had a sadly wicked feeling in their hearts which is called envy, and which will not suffer people to rejoice when others are better and happier than themselves. But real Christians will know nothing of this hateful passion, for they will remember the command which their Bible gives them, to "rejoice with

those that do rejoice," and therefore the pleasures and advantages of other people will always become their own. The wicked courtiers, however, desired to bring Daniel into disgrace; but as they saw that he was very earnest in wishing to do right, they could find no fault to lay to his charge, and were therefore obliged to accuse him of something which was really a duty. So they went to Darius, and persuaded him to pass an order that no one should ask any favour, either from God or man, for thirty days, except from the king alone; and that if any one should venture to disobey this command, he should be thrown directly into a den of hungry lions: they knew very well that Daniel would never be governed by so wicked a law, and that he had, every day,

favours to ask from his God, which were such as no earthly king could grant. Well! the weak and wicked Darius was pleased at the thought of having so much power as to have all gifts in his hands, and was persuaded to sign the order as they desired; but this had no effect upon holy Daniel: he knew that the writing was signed, but he knew also that the Lord's commands were to be obeyed, whatever might be the consequence; so he went into his house, and there prayed openly to his God as before, kneeling three times a day, as he was accustomed to do. This was soon observed by his spiteful enemies, who were watching him for that very purpose; and with eager and malicious joy they ran directly to the king, and, telling him how Daniel had disobeyed the order

he had given, reminded him, that, according to the law which he had made, the Prophet must now be thrown alive into the den of lions. Then the poor weak and misled king saw what a wicked order he had given; then he learned how sad a fault is vanity, how dreadful it is to listen to the flattery of those who seek to puff up our hearts with pride; then was he very unhappy indeed, but his people insisted upon the thing being done as he had first said; so into the place with the wild beasts was Daniel thrown, and a stone was put upon the door to keep him in fast. No sleep could the wretched and repentant king obtain that night; but perhaps some little hope that Daniel's God might be the true God, and a God of power, came during that sorrowful night to mix it-

self with his fears ; for in the morning he got up very early, and, coming to the mouth of the den, he cried out, though with a very sad voice, “ O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee?” Think, however, of the surprise and gratitude he must have felt, when all his terrors were at once removed by hearing Daniel’s voice, which answered him from the bottom of the den, and said, “ My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths that they have not hurt me.” Then Darius instantly desired that the stone might be removed from the door; and a sweet and affecting sight indeed it must have been when the cave was opened, to see all the fury of the savage and hungry lions so tamed by the great power and love

of God, that they lay harmlessly crouching down at the feet of the holy prophet, like the faithful dog that guards its master from harm. Yes, my child! this was a lesson that must have spoken to every heart; it must have said, and it *does* still say to us who hear it, "Behold, no danger can assault God's faithful servants when God himself vouchsafes to be their guard; therefore fear no man, and let no threats or terrors ever cause you to forsake His service: behold, how astonishing is His power; see, and adore the wonders of His love; take up pious David's song and say, 'O fear the Lord, ye that are His saints, for they that fear Him lack nothing: the lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they who seek the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is

good." No—though there is an enemy to your souls who "goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour," fear not *even him*, so long as you put your whole trust in your Saviour's almighty protection; no lion shall have power to harm you, if you walk ever by the kind Shepherd's side. Pray to Him to be with you in all places, confide in His care, listen to His commands, be strong in the recollection of what He has done for you, be comforted by the remembrance of His all-sufficient power, store your memory with His own sweet words, and delight to repeat His promises, "Fear not, little flock; for it is my Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom;" and again, "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."—One little word more of the

history of Daniel yet remains to be told, and though sad, it must not be passed over. No sooner were his safety and the favour of His God made known to all the people, than Darius ordered the wicked men who had accused Daniel to undergo the very punishment they had prepared for him, so every one of them was cast into the den from which *he* had been taken; and now the hunger and fury of the lions, being no longer restrained by the great power of God, raged forth most terribly, and they were all destroyed in a single moment. Then Darius wrote once more, and oh! how different a writing from the last. This is the decree that he sent forth, to be observed by all the people, nations, and languages that dwelt upon the earth; and this is a declaration of

truth and justice which we will pray may be known and acknowledged, and kept in mind for ever and ever; "that in every dominion men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for He is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end."

THE END.

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